



Gower School District 62  
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TO: DUPAGE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

FROM: Victor Simon III, Superintendent of Schools

RE: Public Comment, Regular Business Meeting; *submitted electronically*

DATE: September 9, 2021

Thank you Board Members for your service. I have served as the Superintendent in Gower School District 62 since 2013. Our school district was caught in the middle of a public health and environmental crisis related to ethylene oxide for the year and a half prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This wasn't easy. There was no guidance offered or support given from local or state health agencies. We moved forward as a community and this hard-earned experience helped us face the COVID-19 crisis. Our school district remained open for full day instruction, for all students, for the entire 2020-21 school year. This wasn't easy either.

We have been conducting on-site COVID-19 testing since Oct 2020 with great success. We asked county health officials to partner with us on this effort early on, and were denied. We understood that agency bandwidth was limited and we persisted by adding antigen, PCR, and antibody tests to our locally developed program. We have helped dozens of school districts - several in DuPage county - build a testing program of their own. We tested our students in quarantine to build a data set for a Test to Stay program. We have offered this data and our experience to county health officials. Our work has been recognized by IDPH officials, as well as the CDC and the US Dept. of Education through regional, state, and national presentations on the subject.

I have asked county health officials for a pilot-based use of Test-to-Stay and have been denied. Families in other counties have access to this option regardless of testing experience in schools or local COVID data. We have over a year of testing experience under our belts. If a school district like Gower, one with as much or more experience than anyone in the nation, is not allowed to move forward with a Test-to-Stay program in DuPage, I am left to wonder what further evidence the local health department is looking for to bring this option into our schools. Community Problems require Community Solutions. We have presented a sensible option, continue to offer our support and expertise, and have rolled up our sleeves and tested to demonstrate that such an approach can be carried out safely in schools. I ask the Board to consider allowing a Test-to-Stay option in DuPage immediately - even if on a limited pilot/conditional basis - or clarify, with precision, what evidence is being sought in order to move forward with such an alternative.

With respect and a collaborative spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Simon III".

Victor Simon III