

# Fiction vs. Fact

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FICTION

**District Claim #3:** *"We were advised that SOMEA would return on Monday, March 15, for K-2 only, thereby excluding both 6th and 9th grade, on the condition that we approve three 504 requests. The Board rejected this request because it excludes our 6th and 9th graders and sought to modify SOMEA's return as articulated in their February 15 letter."*

**FACTS:** SOMEA and the district communications in mediation during the week of March 8, 2021 were limited to the return of K-2 classes to hybrid instruction under the condition that the district grant three 504 requests for which ample medical documentation has been provided.

- SOMEA stated on February 15, 2021, that it would continue to educate students remotely through March 15, 2021, to provide "the district the opportunity once again to conduct necessary repairs and upgrades to its buildings' systems as well as remedy its processing of 504 requests so that it is ready to operate on March 15<sup>th</sup> as promised to provide students and staff with a safe environment conducive to learning." Accordingly, a March 15th return date for any cohorts was contingent upon the building repairs and 504 requests. Thus, SOMEA's position regarding its return to hybrid instruction has been consistent.
- Based on the chaos and the district's unpreparedness evidenced with the most recent cohort which returned to school on March 1, 2021, as described under Claim #1, SOMEA has requested an incremental return to hybrid instruction to allow for walkthroughs and to ensure that all staff and students are placed in fit rooms.
- SOMEA requested that the district grant the following three 504 requests of three K-2 teachers as a condition to return:
  - The first 504 request is for accommodations which need to be updated from last year and were approved pre-pandemic.
  - The second 504 request is to delay a return to the building two weeks following the date of a second vaccination scheduled the week of March 8, 2021.
  - The third 504 request is for a staff member with considerable health conditions which in-person instruction would greatly impact.



South Orange Maplewood  
Education Association