

August 4, 2021

Dear Chardon Schools Parent/ Guardian,

We hope you've had a good summer! At the end of the last school year, we hoped that we would be starting back to school with less worry about COVID-19. Unfortunately, the pandemic continues to be a significant concern for many people and organizations. This communication is intended to update you on where we are in the process as the start of school approaches.

At the July 19 Board meeting, the district indicated that our plan - at that time - was to return to school with a masking optional approach. We also shared that the plan was subject to change. Since then, community spread of COVID-19 has increased and masking is now strongly recommended for schools. We are looking carefully at this latest recommendation in order to make the best decision for our students and staff.

We continue to walk a fine and winding line amid the information available, but we do have one thing clearly in our vision – the safety of the kids, their families and our staff members. To that end, we will have a subcommittee of the Board meet next week to review the recommendations from our local and state public health officials and make a final recommendation. Partnerships with these qualified and experienced experts helped guide us last year such that we were able to keep in-person learning for the majority of the time.

Here is what we know at this time:

- COVID-19 is once again on the rise and Geauga County is now considered to have a “Substantial” transmission rate.
- The CDC, the Academy of Pediatrics, the Governor’s office, the Ohio Department of Health, and the Geauga Public Health Department have all clearly stated that they are strongly recommending that people wear masks in all indoor situations where there are large gatherings of people. None of these organizations is requiring masking at this time - they have left this to the schools.
- The Ohio Legislature has enacted legislation that requires the school district to treat all students and staff the same regardless of vaccination status.
- The Ohio Legislature has not renewed the temporary legislation that allowed us to offer full remote learning in the form that students experienced in 2020-21. As a result, the availability of remote learning will be limited to very specific situations this year.
- Our goal continues to be to keep schools open with in-person instruction in a safe and effective manner.

We understand that everyone wants resolution to the question of masking in schools. We also understand that it is crucial for us to continue to carefully monitor all available information to make the best possible decision for our students. A Board subcommittee will meet with district administrators next week to review the latest updates from health officials in order to finalize details of our plan and we will communicate updates to you at that time.

It is important to note that wherever we begin the year, the situation will remain fluid and our plan is always subject to change based on new information.

Sincerely,

Madelon Horvath
President, Chardon Board of Education

Michael P. Hanlon, Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent