



# South Fayette Township School District

## Committee Meeting of the Whole

### *Minutes*

Tuesday, February 15, 2022  
7:30 PM

The Committee Meeting of the Whole of the South Fayette Township Board of School Directors was called to order at 7:39 PM in the Studio, in the High School by President Jen Iriti with the Pledge of Allegiance. President Iriti apologized for the late start announcing the Board held an Executive Session prior to the start of the meeting to discuss personnel and/or legal issues.

**Present:** Teresa Burroughs, Lena Hannah, Paul Brinsky, Bill Ainsworth, Tom Iagnemma, Joe Welch, Prajakta Patankar, Jen Iriti

**Absent:** Len Fornella

**Others:** Chris Voltz, Tucker Arensberg, P.C.; Dr. Michelle Miller, Superintendent; Assistant to the Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Kristin Deichler; Director of Finance/Human Resources Brian Tony; Assistant Director of Finance Chris Juzwick; Athletic Director Mark Keener, Teacher Molly Kuczinski; Heidi Pusateri, Steve Goldstein, Sarah Emanuel, Cheryl Cindrich, Brittany Mahoney, Lauren Ghilani, Dawn Kreuer, Amy Karas, Mandy Novotni, Krista Cooney, Brook Zapf, Stan Shivell, Kelly Barish, Kim Dolence, AJ Dolence, Marlon Klement, Robert Aubrey, Rebecca Yurchick, T.B. ...., Jack Tolley, Dina Zimage, Tom Garubba, Rocky Violi, Shane Coyne, and Mariaelena Amato; Kristen Feltz, Network Systems Administrator Rob Warfield; Cynthia Geisler, Superintendent's Assistant/Board Secretary, and attached list of attendees

President Iriti announced the meeting is being streamed into the theatre; being recorded; and per Board policy everyone in person must be wearing a mask covering their nose and chin.

Dr. Miller provided the following information regarding the Health & Safety Plan:

- Thanked parents and community members for joining us at tonight's board meeting, whether in person or virtually
- Thanked our administration, nurses, and administrative assistants for their efforts during this school year, especially for their efforts since the CDC, DOH, and ACHD guidelines were revised in late December and early January; guideline revisions, the Omicron variant have been extremely challenging; guideline revisions most likely intended to lessen isolation or quarantine restrictions; new guidelines posed greater challenges for our district
- Thanked educators for providing continuity of instruction, especially in January with so many students and families impacted by COVID
- School's protocols used and to provide recommendations to the Board of possible revisions to the Health and Safety Plan
- In January, ACHD provided a flow chart we have been following that identifies isolation and quarantine guidance for schools; posted on our website
- Specifically, guidance in the flowchart identifies when students can return to school if they were identified as a close contact in school or out; asymptomatic students are able to return to school after day five of quarantine if they are unvaccinated and wear a mask through day 10, per the ACHD at all times during the school day

- Student athletes still exempt from wearing masks during active play time; this was altered with the new guidance in January. Student athletes who are close contacts are expected to wear a mask, even during play time until the 10th day after exposure; whether the athlete is vaccinated or unvaccinated; guidance provided from ACHD in January, after the December CDC guidance changed
- Majority of close contacts (approx. 2/3) were due to exposure outside of school
- Majority of quarantined close contacts were due to exposure outside of school
- Quarantine for OUT of school exposure:
  - ✓ 1st quarter: 184 (59% of all quarantine close contacts)
  - ✓ 2nd quarter: 445 (62% of all quarantine close contacts)
  - ✓ 3rd quarter (from January 15-February 10): 159 (76% of all quarantine close contacts)  
2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter data mainly due to the holidays.
- Quarantine for IN school exposure:
  - ✓ 1st quarter: 127 (41% of all quarantine close contacts)
  - ✓ 2nd quarter: 277 (38% of all quarantine close contacts)
  - ✓ 3rd quarter (from January 15-February 10): 126 (24% of all quarantine close contacts)
- Social distancing is a factor in determining close contact; most learning spaces for our students offer social distancing between 3-6 feet apart; rarely, can students be spaced anywhere more than 6 feet apart, due to buildings approaching capacity and increasing enrollment; close contacts are identified in seating on buses, cafeterias, and often lab spaces with mixed furniture
- ACHD advised school leaders with revised guidelines in January, the only time students could take off their mask if identified as asymptomatic close contact or returned to school after five days after having COVID was for eating lunch and still needed to be 6 feet apart
- ACHD stated these students needed to be six feet apart in order for students to remove masks; due to lack of space in cafeterias and other locations in our buildings, and the need to supervise students while in our buildings, be creative in finding locations for students; still able to be social/talk with peers; offered alternate locations to students who may have concerns/different need
- Students assigned to alternative locations for lunch may be vaccinated or unvaccinated; District does not disclose vaccination status to any personnel or any individual, unless for staff there is a need to know, and especially, not disclosed to students; does not violate FERPA nor confidentiality; assumptions made by parents or students that all students who eat in alternative spaces for lunch are unvaccinated, this is an erroneous assumption
- ACHD provided encouraging statistics; declining numbers/COVID cases over the past several weeks, still at substantial transmission rates; death rate in Allegheny County 1:100 people; mortality may not reflect pediatric or school age children; reality is people in our community have lost loved ones, neighbors, or colleagues to COVID; even one child being admitted to ICU/person of any age dying; be sensitive in our words and comments, many children have conditions, concerns, and diagnoses; many families have experienced loss or on-going health issues due to COVID
- CDC, DOH, and ACHD still recommend students and staff wear a mask when indoors; conference call on February 10, Dr. LuAnn Brink, Chief Epidemiologist at the ACHD, reiterated to school leaders the ACHD recommends keeping masking in place until the positivity rate drops to moderate or low rate, based on the percent positivity; as of last February 10, Allegheny County at an 18% percent positivity rate; as of this morning, percent positivity for the rolling 7 day average was 15.5%; moderate positivity rate is between 5-8%, low positivity rate is less than 5%
- Many individuals have commented that most schools in the area have moved to optional masking; several Allegheny County schools have moved to optional masking, a large percentage that have not; to the best of our knowledge, 29 schools continuing with universal masking and fourteen have made masking optional; South Fayette is not an outlier in its masking approach

- Aware of two lawsuits regarding districts moving to optional masking in the region and one in eastern PA; these districts ordered by the judge to continue universal masking until the cases can be heard on March 24, 2022; one might assume if our district would immediately make masking optional, we would be enjoined with these lawsuits; also assume may be ordered to remain with universal masking regardless of transmission rates; court decision may not occur until the end of March or even through April; District would have greater local control over moving to masking optional if we used the ACHD metric identifying moderate or low percent positivity
- My recommendation the Board consider any change to masking to the Health and Safety Plan would reflect that guidance from the ACHD.
- Concerns about Test to Stay; reviewed as part of our Health and Safety Plan; program would have nurses or other officials testing students; reviewing the option with our nursing staff, we have decided not to participate; we are not able to continue this support with our current resources either internally or those that are limited in providing those outside; districts who have signed up have been waiting for months to implement, some have been successful, due to lack of resources at the state level
- Reviewing South Fayette data collected regarding school spread, data indicates school spread is unlikely but not impossible; we believe that this is partially due to our mitigation efforts
  - ✓ During the first quarter, three close contacts from school exposure test positive
  - ✓ During the second quarter, twenty-five close contacts from school exposure test positive
  - ✓ During the third quarter from January 15 through February 10, eleven close contacts from school exposure test positive

The majority of these statistics were from the first 3-weeks in January.
- Due to data collected and reviewed, recommending the Board consider eliminating quarantine for asymptomatic close contacts, including lunch quarantine; continue to monitor and collect data; and eliminate any required masking for outdoor recess; would continue to require students who return to school who were COVID positive to eat lunch in an alternative lunch location until their ten day period has ended
- If agreed upon tonight, this new protocol would become effective on February 16, 2022; District would continue to contact trace and alert parents that their child is a close contact in order for parents to monitor symptoms and decide if they wish to voluntarily quarantine their child.

Dr. Miller asked attorney Chris Voltz to weigh in and share some comments on the legality of what the Board and Administration have been considering.

Mr. Voltz proceeded with the following information:

- No dispute masking in schools is controversial and divisive; no dispute that both sides of the argument can point to credible studies/authority figures to support their respective positions;
  - ✓ Example, February 8, 2022 New York Times article:
    - Joseph Allen, Harvard University researcher who studies indoor environmental quality, including in schools: "I think it's entirely appropriate that we start lifting school mask mandates now."
    - Seema Lakdawala, respiratory virus researcher at the University of Pittsburgh: "We're just starting to get it back under control. I don't think we should be abandoning the interventions we have that are still helpful."
- Board aware of strong arguments on both sides; receptive to hearing arguments as to why it should consider whether to move to a mask optional model
- Board must consider the CDC recommendation to wear masks; recent update on January 13, 2022, CDC states:
  - ✓ "When teachers, staff, and students consistently and correctly wear a mask, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained."

- CDC also recommends listen to guidance from local health authorities
- February 10, 2022, ACHD recommended while in high/substantial phase wear masks in schools
- Referenced recent court decisions; unique facts; noted boards lifting mask mandates in counties still in high transmission rates; CDC and local health authorities recommended mask mandates still be implemented
- As of today, we are still in the high transmission rate, but numbers falling; we continue to monitor transmission rates; will work with ACHD to modify masking requirements when appropriate.
- Clarify mistaken legal theories on social media:
  - ✓ School Boards have absolute authority to require masks during the pandemic; School Code gives school boards the authority to adopt reasonable rules and regulations regarding its governing and control and may adopt and enforce such reasonable rules and regulations as it deems necessary and proper regarding the management of its school affairs
  - ✓ Given the current state of the pandemic, recommendations of the CDC, other health agencies and the PDE, entirely reasonable under the school code for the Board to adopt its own policies, rules or plans designed to stop or deter person to person COVID 19 transmission
  - ✓ Accusations the District's mask mandate constitutes child abuse under the Child Protective Services law; hopefully only venting frustrations; mask requirements are not child abuse; child abuse law definition includes:
    - Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly taking action that interferes with the breathing of a child; definition added in 2013, in response to concerns of harm caused to children when their mouth is taped shut, or an object like a sock is placed in their mouth to prevent the child from speaking or crying; no similarities between masks and actions that interfere with a child's airway; September 2021, the Center for Children's Justice issued consensus statement "deeply troubled by the growing course of Pennsylvanian's including some elected officials who are equating child abuse with a child wearing a face covering intended to mitigate the spread of COVID 19; brazen comments diminish the harsh reality of child abuse; a callous disregard for the lifelong physical, emotional and economic impact of child abuse"
  - ✓ PDE and Dept of Human Services issued statement:
    - Reports that incorrectly equate to wearing a mask to child abuse, represent a small portion of overall reports to the child line; an inappropriate and unnecessary distraction for educators and child welfare professionals; DHS's office of Children, Youth, and Families has received requests for confirmation that masking in line with the guidelines from health officials is not a form of child abuse
    - PA's Child Protective Services Law describes obstructing a child's breathing is child abuse, mask wearing for children 2 and older does not obstruct breathing and is not child abuse; comparing this life-saving measure to child abuse is a disrespectful misrepresentation that can tie up already limited resources; encourage all Pennsylvanians to report concerns about a child's well-being; bad-faith reports of neglect or abuse expend the time and resources of child welfare workers at the state/county level; further endangering both children and adults in the midst of a public health crisis
- Important issues to discuss, Board looking forward to hearing comments and concerns about issues that are relevant.

Dr. Miller provided the following revision recommendations to the Health & Safety Plan:

- Effective February 16, 2022 eliminating asymptomatic close contacts from quarantine; optional for parents, not required
- Language added to the Health & Safety Plan:
  - ✓ Parents have the option to keep their children home if identified as being a close contact
  - ✓ still do contact tracing and make parents aware of that information

- ✓ eliminate the alternative lunch for those students who are considered to be close contacts and are asymptomatic; students who are considered a close contact and showing symptoms will need to stay home or be tested
- Recommend to consider as a Board to move to masking optional when the ACHD metric, percent positivity; still getting clarification from them; use that metric to move to masking optional, rates continue to go down; 18% last week to 15% today; decrease in schools and community

**AGENDA APPROVAL:**

Brinsky seconded Welch on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Solicitor for Board approval of the February 15, 2022, revised Committee Meeting of the Whole agenda.

Voice Vote – All Yes

**Consent Agenda**

1. The Board considered approval of Minutes from the following Board Meetings:

Committee Meeting of the Board	Tuesday, January 18, 2022
Regular Board Meeting	Tuesday, January 25, 2022

2. The Board considered approval of the following Financial Reports which have been reviewed by the Superintendent and Secondary Administration:

Athletic Fund	Mark Keener
High School Activity Fund	Rebecca Bruce
Middle School Activity Fund	Rebecca Bruce
Board Summary Reports (November 2021-January 2022)	Chris Juzwick
Tax Collector Report (November 2021)	Kevin Biber

3. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Finance Brian Tony, and Tax Collector Kevin Biber for Board approval of the provided list of Real Estate Refunds due to reduction in assessment and/or overpayment.
4. The Board considered approval of the expenditures that were submitted for Board review to be approved at the Regular Board Meeting.

**Superintendent’s Monthly Report – Dr. Michelle Miller**

Dr. Miller reported:

- Thanked South Fayette mechanics, maintenance, custodians, Township leadership and road crews, as well as Mr. Timmins and Mr. Soubie for work they did on February 3/4 keeping our community and campus safe; clearing campus lots/sidewalks, cleaning our Township roads and helping keep our community safe, we appreciate their dedication to the safety of our community
- Last week was School Counselor Appreciation week; thanked school counselors for all their hard work in supporting our students, staff, and families
- Currently have 198 students enrolled for kindergarten and expecting more; very excited to welcome our littlest Lions into the building this spring for visits
- Strategic Planning – a group of committed vested partners, in the final stages of completing a three year Strategic Plan for 2023-2025; goals will focus on
  - 1) Supporting the well-being of the whole learner

- 2) Increasing future-focused, high quality learning opportunities for all students
- 3) Increasing the academic growth and achievement for all students
- 4) Addressing future growth and demographics in enrollment
- 5) Creating a comprehensive communications plan
- ✓ Adopted tenets of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging will be woven into our work, practices, and expectations
- Portrait of a Lion Learner: regardless of age, South Fayette students have proven they rise to expectations of excellence; to effectively support students and help on their educational journey, created seven expectations of ALL of our Lion Learners; expectations will be embedded in classroom expectations and learning opportunities beginning with the 2022-23 school year; expectations have students embracing expectations of being a:
  - 1) Curious and Critical Thinker
  - 2) Continuous Learner
  - 3) Collaborative Contributor
  - 4) Courageous Seeker
  - 5) Compelling Communicator
  - 6) Community Builder
  - 7) Compassionate and Productive Leader
- Communications – partnered with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to complete a Communications Audit; over fifteen focus groups; provide an update in March
- Student Well-being and Services – framework for necessary support and programs to ALL students; met with Physical Education staff and counselors to address services currently providing and to address any gaps in services that our students need
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging – lead by Dr. Chuck Herring, continues to lead efforts in the region and across the Commonwealth in how to provide equity for ALL students; each teacher completes a DEI filtering tool requiring them to review curriculum to ensure lesson plans, assignments, and assessments are supportive of all students; continue to embrace our student SHOUT chapter that creates opportunities of awareness to our student body
- Curriculum – pleased to announce that the District has selected Ms. Cristine Wagner-Deitch to assume the role of the District’s Curriculum Director on March 14; comes to us with over twenty years of curriculum experience at the intermediate unit and school district levels
- Policies – beginning a yearlong process to review school board policies; partnering and support with attorney Voltz

### **Business Office**

1. The Superintendent, Network Systems Administrator Rob Warfield, and Director of Finance Brian Tony recommend Board approval of a Fair Market Value (FMV) 1:1 Lease of 1,000 student laptops for the Intermediate School and 80 staff laptops Districtwide at an annual amount of \$164,245.40, for fifty-one (51) months with Dell Financial.

President Iriti announced the above motion will be voted on at the end of the agenda.

2. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval of the 2020-2021 School District Audit as prepared by Hosack, Specht, Muetzel & Wood, LLP.
3. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Finance Brian Tony, and Assistant Director of Finance Chris Juzwick for Board approval of the agreement and “Ramp-Up” proposal with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) to move to the web-based Asset Inventory, Fund Accounting, Payroll, Personnel, and Staff Portal, effective July 1, 2022. The agreement is for 6 years and has the following ramp-up costs:

- 2022-2023 - \$18,162
- 2023-2024 - \$20,857
- 2024-2025 - \$23,552
- 2025-2026 - \$26,247
- 2026-2027 - \$28,942
- 2027-2028 - \$31,637

4. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Director of Finance Brian Tony, and Director of Student Support Services Dr. Rachel Andler for Board approval of the adoption of policies, procedures, and use of IDEA-Part B funds by the School District per the agreement with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for the 2022-2023 school year.

### **Personnel**

For Minute purposes, the Superintendent proudly announced that tenure has been earned by the following teacher who has fulfilled all requirements as set forth in Pennsylvania School Code, Title 24, PS 11-1108.

- Brittney Lunn, Grade 3 teacher, Intermediate School

1. The Superintendent and Middle School Principal Dr. Erin Crimone recommend Board approval to hire Kristin Fagan as a Long Term Substitute Grade 8 History teacher in the Middle School, at the rate of \$160.00 per day, effective retroactive to December 1, 2021.
2. The Superintendent and Intermediate School Principal Tom Kaminski recommend Board approval to hire Ashley Iagnemma as a Long Term Substitute Grade 4 teacher in the Intermediate School, at the rate of \$160.00 per day, effective February 16, 2022.
3. The Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony recommend Board approval of an intermittent FMLA leave of absence request for Melissa Dennison, Accountant, effective retroactive to February 2, 2022.
4. The Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony recommend Board approval to hire Kim Hartnett as a Substitute Staff Accountant, effective retroactive to February 11, 2022. She will work approximately 24 hours per week at the rate of \$35.00 per hour.

President Iriti announced the above motions will be voted on at the end of the agenda.

5. The Superintendent and Intermediate School Principal recommend Board approval of the leave of absence request for the Intermediate School Assistant Principal, effective on or about April 8, 2022, with an expected return date of August 1, 2022.
6. The Superintendent, Assistant to the Superintendent for Secondary Education, and Intermediate School Principal recommend Board approval to hire an Interim Intermediate School Assistant Principal effective on or about April 8, 2022, through the end of the students' school year, and as per the terms of the letter dated February 23, 2022.
7. The Superintendent and Middle School Principals recommend Board approval of Middle School EPR positions for the 2021-2022 school year.
8. The Superintendent and Director of Student Support Services recommend Board approval of a Certified School Nurse for the Mardi Gras Dance to be held on March 4, 2022.

9. The Superintendent and Director of Student Support Services recommend Board approval of a student at Edinboro University, to complete her internship in the Student Support Services department, from May 2022 through August 2022, pending receipt of required documents. There will be no cost to the District.
10. The Superintendent and Director of Food Services recommend Board approval to hire a Food Service employee, pending receipt of required documents, effective February 23, 2022.
11. The Superintendent and Director of Transportation recommend Board approval to hire a Substitute Bus Aide, effective February 23, 2022.
12. The Superintendent, Athletic Director, and Head Boys Varsity Basketball Coach recommend Board approval of the status change of a Volunteer Assistant Basketball Coach to a paid Assistant Basketball Coach effective retroactive for the 2021-2022 season.
13. The Superintendent, Athletic Director, and Head Varsity Wrestling Coach recommend Board approval of the status change of a paid Assistant Wrestling Coach to a Volunteer Assistant Wrestling Coach effective retroactive for the 2021-2022 season.
14. The Superintendent, Athletic Director, and Head Track & Field Coach recommend Board approval of a Volunteer Assistant Track & Field Coach effective for the 2021-2022 season.
15. The Superintendent, Athletic Director, and the winter sport season Head Coaches recommend Board approval of the compensations for the winter 2021-2022 season.

### **Education**

1. The Superintendent and High School Principals recommend Board approval to permit James Hausman and Maureen Pedzwater to accompany 75 students to participate in the 2022 Pennsylvania Technology Student Association (TSA) State Competition being held at Seven Springs Resort in Champion, Pennsylvania from Wednesday, April 20, 2022 through Saturday, April 23, 2022. Students would be responsible for making up all school work during their absence. Appropriate adult to student ratios for supervision will be assured by the administration. The cost of the trip includes travel, lodging, meals, and conference registration fees and are included in the 2021-2022 budget.
2. The Superintendent recommends Board approval to permit Dr. Matt Callison, Director of Innovation, Strategic Partnerships, and Instructional Technology to attend the national Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) conference in Nashville, Tennessee, from Monday, April 11, 2022 through Thursday, April 14, 2022. The cost of the conference includes registration, travel, lodging, and meals, and is part of the 2021-2022 budget.

President Iriti announced the above motions will be voted on at the end of the agenda.

3. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principal Dr. Laura Hartzell for Board approval of the list of 2022 potential graduates, based on fulfilling all requirements for graduation.
4. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Innovation, Strategic Partnerships, and Instructional Technology Dr. Matt Callison for Board approval to permit Melissa Unger, K-2 STEAM teacher to attend and present at the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, from Sunday,

June 26, 2022 through Wednesday, June 29, 2022. The cost of the conference includes registration, travel, lodging, and meals, and is included in the 2021-2022 budget.

5. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Intermediate School Principal Tom Kaminski, and Intermediate School Assistant Principal Kristen Johnson for Board approval to hold a Summer Strings Camp in the summer of 2022. The camp will be held from Monday, July 25, 2022 through Thursday, July 28, 2022. The morning session will run from 9:30 AM to 11:45 AM and will be open to orchestra students entering grades 4 and 5. The afternoon session will run from 12:30 PM to 2:45 PM and will be open to orchestra students entering grade 6, 7, and 8. The session on Thursday will end at 3:30 PM. The \$30.00 registration fee will cover the cost of all staffing and programming.
6. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent, Intermediate School Principal Tom Kaminski, and Elementary School Principal Laurie Gray for Board approval to hold Summer STEAM Camps for both Intermediate and Elementary Schools students in the summer of 2022. The camps will be held from Monday, July 11, 2022, through Thursday, July 14, 2022. The morning session will run from 8:45 AM to 12:00 PM and will be open to students entering grades 4, 5, and 6. The afternoon session will run from 12:45 PM to 4:00 PM and will be open to students entering grades 2 and 3. The registration fee of \$100 per child will cover the cost of all staffing and programming.

### **Transportation**

There were no items discussed.

### **Athletics**

1. The Superintendent, Athletic Director Mark Keener, and Head Track & Field Coach Scott Litwinovich recommend Board approval to permit the Girls 4x200 Meter Relay team and student athlete Jake Borgesi to travel to New York City, New York, to participate in the New Balance National Indoor Track & Field Championships from Thursday, March 10, 2022 through Sunday, March 13, 2022. Students would be responsible for making up all school work during their absence. Appropriate adult to student ratios for supervision will be assured by the administration. The cost of the trip includes travel, lodging, meals, and registration fees and will be paid for by the Boosters.

President Iriti announced the above motion will be voted on at the end of the agenda.

### **Construction**

There were no items discussed.

### **Miscellaneous**

1. The Board considered the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval of the second reading of following revised policies and attachment:
  - Board Policy 610 Purchases Subject to Bid/Quotation
  - Board Policy 611 Purchases Budgeted
  - Attachment 626 Procurement – Federal Programs

2. Board approval that as of February 16, 2022, the District will not require asymptomatic staff or students who are close contacts to quarantine, regardless of vaccination status. Students and staff who are close contacts may elect to stay home and quarantine for up to 10 days and at which point they will return to school unless they show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. If they show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, they will comply with the current isolation guidance. Students who are close contacts and elect to quarantine and students who must isolate shall not be marked absent if they fully participate in their assigned remote instruction. Absences for staff who elect to quarantine or staff who must isolate will be dictated by existing labor/employment agreements.

And direct the Superintendent to revise the Health and Safety Plan for consideration at the February 22, 2022, Board of School Directors meeting to include masking optional when the Allegheny County Health Department's 7 day rolling average for COVID transmission is identified to be at the "moderate" or "low" transmission rate, as recommended by the ACHD, and to make any other necessary document changes to be consistent with this directive.

President Iriti announced the above motion will be voted on at the end of the agenda.

### **Board Comments**

There were no comments at this time.

### **SUSPENSION OF BUSINESS TO HEAR FROM RESIDENTS AND/OR TAXPAYERS**

Robert Aubrey, Kingston Drive – important to be honest, transparent; comment by solicitor regarding the declaration of a pandemic emergency, we are not still under that, lifted in June 2021; picking and choosing CDC masking requirements to follow, not following everything the website calls for; the CDC calls for wet masks to be removed and replaced; students sitting with wet masks all day, you are not following CDC guidelines

Dina Zimage, Seminary Ave. – impossible to get a hold of any board member to express my concerns; remind you, you are elected officials, elected by me and everyone else here; duty is to listen to concerns and comments, and respond appropriately; only interaction I have is with the superintendent informing me she is not allowed to provide personal information, the school board will respond to her; since beginning of the pandemic, I have sent multiple emails and made multiple phone calls to the contact information on the website; one board member has responded, there are nine of you; CDC and health department did not elect you, I did and people like me; think about your duties that you made an oath to uphold; parents, tax payers, and constituents should make decisions for our children's health and education, including but not limited to, wearing masks, vaccine and what is being taught; only our voices should be heard, standing up to whatever tyranny you are imposing

Steve Goldstein, Walnut Ridge – first grader, moved here 6 years ago, 4 good years; 2020 happened, didn't know what was happening, things shut down; now figuring out what is going on, my faith in SF has dropped; disorganized with virtual, but now dragging on; talk about 14 other district with mask optional, how do we become one of those districts; came because it was the best district and want the best for our daughter; I want her to be able to breathe; Mr. Voltz's comment on child abuse, quoting from 15-20 years ago; have they written child abuse about masking somebody, headaches, nauseous and sore throat; I travel to the west coast, my throat hurts after 6 hours; children have to learn with this on everyday; congratulate you for creating COVID hysteria; taking away the best years of their lives; cannot buy time; masks should go; talking through a mask; you are a colossal failure, should be one of the 14; 1 of 100

have died, was that a school age person, could have been 75; Mr. Voltz's conflicting stories, what is happening to us, make a decision; kids aren't dying; affecting everyone's life at 15% and want to get to 5%; get to 1% and mask them forever, ridiculous, give them their quality of life back.

Sarah Emanuel, Firwood Drive – SF School Board and administration, thank you for following the science; making tough decisions when it comes to keeping our kids safe, I'm glad I'm amusing to you; regarding quarantining, masking, and testing; navigating through a global pandemic; keeping up with change guidelines, variants and parental pressure to quote "not be chic", not an easy task; embarrassed and disgusted by what I've heard and read by various community members regarding masking; highlights include, masks are about government control, the horrific impact of masking will last forever, masks are destroying immune systems, children forced to live in fear and paranoia because of masking, people complain when blacks were separated from whites, how can we stand for our kids being separated .....

President Iriti asked for silence if you don't have the floor; if difficult to do, welcome to go to the theatre and come back to give your comments.

People complain when blacks were separated from whites, how can we stand for our kids being separated at lunch because of COVID; and this one, our kids have been traumatized by mask wearing and have been victims of child abuse; privilege that oozes from this statement sickens me; taught for over 20 years in several different states; trauma is a child stabbed twice in the back in gym class; a child struck by lightning walking outside between classes, putting them in cardiac arrest, school nurse trying to bring him back to life while other students watch; arsonist torches a student's house, killing him and five siblings; 13 year old goes to a classmates funeral who was shot between dueling gangs; masks are child abuse, tell that to a child who came to school with a black eye after his father hit him in the face; tell that to students who don't have a home, have to sit doing their homework outside along a building, no room in the car they are living in; mental abuse, imagine not knowing where your next meal is coming from, relying on what the school provides, what can be found at the food bank; some parents in this community need a huge wake-up call; instead of throwing teachers and nurses under the bus, dogging the school board on social media, investigate what trauma really is; put you in touch with organizations who will put your passions to good use....

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

Ms. Emanuel added you can all run for school board.

President Iriti asked Ms. Emanuel for order.

Tom Garrubba, Firwood Drive – talked about metrics, what about following the trends; seen Calvin ball for too long; Calvin & Hobbs cartoon, Calvin playing ball with stuffed tiger, always changing the rules to win; Calvin ball has to end; metrics change, based on ideology and egos, in business, politics and locally; detrimental to my kids, students, psychologically hurting them; don't know right from wrong in regards to mask wearing, following what rules today; neighbor against neighbor, evident this evening; use new metrics, follow the trends; can't use metrics as final indicators; I travel internationally, treating it like the flu, and what it will become; have to adopt and adapt, follow the trends; use good judgement when following the trends for the sake of the children and community; please follow the trends. Thank you

Rebecca Yurchick, Oakridge Road – attempted to reach the school board, emailed, asked for phone numbers, office hours, any form of contact; only received email information, no one responds; 3 minutes is unacceptable, need many meetings to address all of my concerns; here to help us; daughter in the ES; followed policy for 2 years; now gone too far and is unflexible; unwilling to accept the evolution of this situation; COVID will be an endemic; children and schools learn to function with the virus for the rest of our lives; daughter diagnosed with a generalized anxiety disorder; the school's COVID policies have

exacerbated her anxiety extremely, nervous and anxious to enter stores; anxious when a family member accidentally touches anyone in public; drastic anxiety about germs in school, causing major disruptions in learning; quarantined for multiple days due to stomach pains, caused by an issue unrelated to COVID, and not permitted to attend school; will not be receiving a prorated tax bill for days denied access to education; she was exposed to someone with COVID; she is vaccinated but still necessary to isolate her and to be a spectacle in the cafeteria; putting children on display, isolating them while so young and concerned about what peers think, is cruel; should not be subjecting them to mental, emotional and psychological stress or teaching this is normal; who is advocating for my daughter and these children against the mental and psychological stress and strain; ACHD and CDC does not take mental health into consideration; vast majority of community do not have masks on in public, but expected to wear masks in school; no sense or reason; don't take my rights for the few who don't want to adapt; please reconsider these policies..... respond to my emails

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

Heidi Pusateri, Sterling Drive – ACHD death rate is wrong; 1% death rate would be 12,000, not 3,055, the county death rate; consider revising the Health & Safety Plan, making masks parental choice; Health & Safety Plan keeping kids safe, ask yourself, have you or children left home unmasked in last 4 months, entered a store/public place unmasked, attended a party, concert, gym, sporting event, etc. unmasked; yes, then masking children in school is ridiculous and hypocritical; restrictions leading to community unrest, over stressing teachers and support staff, have to carry out requirements; survey staff on how they are; SF not about tradition, pride, and excellence, more about pushing regulations; masking needs to be parental choice; no one here wants to harm our children; my responsibility for mental, emotional and physical health of my children; your responsibility to provide education; reiterate, no legislation supporting the Health & Safety Plan; not common sense; give back their education, experiences and rightfully deserve from the district. Thank you

Cheryl Cindrach (Postufka), Hickory Heights – masks are not an absolute, wearer will actually be protected from not contracting COVID, non-wearer will absolutely get COVID, paraphrasing Judge Stickman's opinion; cases mentioned; fallacy masks protect everyone; cases children; reference cases with masks optional and not getting sued; Chartiers Valley and Montour not getting sued; Montour's policy effective January 31, 2022, encourage recommendation of mask wearing on a two week trial basis; two week trial basis, no increase in cases, no lawsuits; why focusing on negative; board and district operating out of fear; understand priority to keep children safe and not getting sued; do homework, times changing; other districts going mask optional; child abuse, reciting definition, mental health of children.....don't want to hear about self harm

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

President Iriti announced if you did not have a chance to finish your comments, welcome to send them via email to the Board.

President Iriti announced time cannot be yielded to another individual; each individual entitled to 3 minutes.

Lauren Ghilani, Marley Way – 3 school age daughters, 20 years of teaching, husband superintendent; end mandatory masking, stop segregating students at lunch, and end quarantining; why contact tracing/quarantining when county/most schools have stopped; 90% of quarantines reported by schools do not end in a positive case; students not masking properly inside/outside classroom; attended sporting events, students not masking or wearing them around their chins; human, students walking the hallways today; masking from a teacher perspective, impairs verbal/non-verbal communication between teacher/student; limits facial identification; occasional physical side effects; visualization of entire face crucially important to social, emotional, and speech development; 2<sup>nd</sup> grader learned to read without seeing teacher's mouth and make friends without seeing their faces; non-verbal feedback weighs their actions/behavior against others; develop social/emotional intelligence, crucial to educational

development; ACHD superintendents informed last week, 65% drop in cases in county; when in moderate range, will endorse unmasking; PPE designed to protect vulnerable people and those who choose to wear it; why forcing, people can protect themselves without infringing on others; no science, most agencies will not support mandatory masking past beginning of March; January is old news; ton of data indicating detrimental effects on children's social/emotional health and ability to socialize due to masking and quarantining; Dept. of Education reports rises in anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and suicide in children/young adults, frightening; classrooms don't look/feel normal, need to; .....

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

Brittany Mahoney, Windsor Drive – 4 children, 3 in school, 4<sup>th</sup> grader's last normal year, 1<sup>st</sup> grade; 2<sup>nd</sup> grader never had a normal year, kindergartner sits behind plexi-glass, wearing a mask trying to learn how to read from a masked teacher; sits at desk for indoor recess; assemblies, field trips, class parties, track & field day, group work, fun classroom activities all taken away past 2 years; memories and years they'll never get back; education much more than curriculum; what elementary education should be vs what they're experiencing is painful to parents; fight for my children, be their voice; asking to remove the mask mandate policy and COVID restrictions being forced on children and teachers effective immediately; allow parents to choose what is best for their children/health; social/emotional impact of policies are profound; they deserve the best education we can give them; past 2 years been anything but the best; forcing students to wear masks in school with life back to normal for many, including surrounding districts, is unfair; we are going to comparing to surrounding districts; they are bothered by them, wearing for 7 hours/day; stop holding children responsible to stop the spread of a virus that has weakened immensely, and vaccine preventing serious infections; masking is not protecting children; how the immune system works; trying to prevent infections/COVID at a young age, detrimental to their adult years; COVID not going away; stop looking at transmission rates; explain to child why she can't go to the sweetheart dance with dad, up the road they can; gym packed shoulder to shoulder at basketball games, can't play with a classmate; daughter put a school issued mask on with a hole in the mouth to play her recorder in music class, put on one covering mouth immediately after; enough of isolation for indoor recess, isolation for lunch.....do better for our children

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

Brook Zapf, Walnut Ridge Circle – sent previous emails highlighting mental health, teacher burnout, leper lunches, and social/emotional toll policies taking our youngest students; we take risks everyday, constantly assess risks; drive, let teens drive, eat rare steaks, don't exercise as much; CDC makes recommendations all the time; cannot follow all recommendations, assess your own risk; COVID policy response that applies to children been inept; 2 years of data; to not use the data to re-access the policy would be evil; children are not super spreaders; not the reservoir of COVID; children are dead ends when it comes to transmission, even the unvaccinated; the only rationale to continued masking is to protect adults who choose not to get vaccinated; vaccines available to all who want them, this rationale is unfounded; a burden no child should carry; apologize to my children daily, stuck in this situation and have no control; universal masking in schools, very visible and socially invasive, appears to do nothing to protect the vulnerable; more prudent to create measures to allow those in fear to protect themselves, rather than to continue to sacrifice well being of my children; time to remove any restrictions which stigmatize children as vectors of disease, and prevent in-person instruction everyday; 2 years of suffering and arbitrary and unnecessary school closures, children deserve a school year free from unscientific, impunative restrictions; as educational leaders, your duty to provide that; elected to do; if not now, when can parents take their rights back to make health/wellness decisions for own children; ignoring naturally acquired or vaccinated immunity, small risk to children, harm from masks, no one's best interest; now is the time to be brave.

Mandy Novotni Swerkle, First Ave. – proud of parents in the fight for our children; 2 years and needs to end; indoctrined to believing they will carry virus to families, feeling guilty and submissive; being raised

in fear; hundreds reaching out, heartbreaking stories, destroying our kids; son a picky eater, anxiety at lunchtime; missed school one day, afraid to go back of being isolated at lunch; kids at recess not allow to play with them and make fun because he has COVID; anyone taking a toll on mental/emotional distress on children; isolating children for no reason, sitting on stage, 6 feet apart any different than playing outside at recess unmasked; missing school, falling behind academically, due to nonsense contact tracing and protocols; how many actually getting COVID that were exposed and sent home; neighbor's child wore a shield, was exposed, had 1 day quarantine; when questioned teachers/staff following protocol; mentally challenging and hurting children; shame on those who voted mandates in; small community, people talk, you are seen in public, at work and at school with no masks, pictures taken and sent to me; hypocrites; at last meeting in the hallway, board member came out asking to pull my mask over my nose and did not address the police officer not wearing a mask; gave the officer a thumbs up and went back in the room; waited in parking lot asking why, would call chief in the AM, never asked to put a mask on; political, lying and misleading propaganda; two medical exemptions for daughter, both denied; sent home, missed school due to conditions from masking; last response was no disability and medical condition not severe enough; non-professional determined condition not critical enough since not disabled; if child becomes permanently disabled from denied mask exemption, lack of understanding of what a medical condition is, will it be approved; people are fed up with the nonsense; put out silent survey asking public comments and clear public answer from each board member.....

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

Stan Shivell, Christine Court – thank you for the support, thank the board for making some progress in reducing contact tracing; small child in Little Lions, kindergarten next year; terrified masks will be around next year; he has a slight speech delay, getting him past stuttering and to pronounce words correctly; following ACHD guidance to make decisions, 2/3 of close contact quarantines from at home; nobody wears masks anywhere, at church, gym, market, sleepovers without masks; moderate case counts, a relic from January 2020, high transmission rates, scared, everyone dying; case counts increased, death percentage not as bad anymore; Omicron changed things; ultimate authority to make decisions on masking, listening to ACHD who shut down the economy; why still listening; high low moderate rate not relevant to what's happening; 940 pediatric deaths nationwide, less than 1%; fear driven stuff, concepts from January 2020, not February 2022; appreciate getting better at contact tracing.....

President Iriti indicated his 3 minutes had expired.

Lindsay Loebig, Newbury Highland – appreciate listening; all under tough times navigating through it all; on behalf of outside individuals who want to have a voice; no stats, CDC information; kids struggling emotionally, psychologically, and academically; taking a toll on parents and teachers; appreciate you listening to parents' voices; look at stats and tangible evidence in front of us; things going backwards, taking a toll on everyone; thank you; kids are going backwards and being disadvantaged. Thank you

Dawn Kreuer, Windsor Court – mom of 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders; struggling with proof that masks don't work, quarantining process damaging to their education; hard working kid, new to 6<sup>th</sup> grade/middle school, not thriving as a normal 6<sup>th</sup> grader, masking a huge part of that; missed 5 days in January for in-person learning, trying to stay on track, two more days in-person learning due to snow; out of 32 learning days, he missed 7; anxiety due to missed in-person learning; mental health being attacked due to masking and quarantine rules; science no longer supports masking; told 10 year old going to board meeting, he was so excited asking me to help get rid of mask wearing; not thriving in the district any longer, must do better. Thank you

John Zelczak, Windsor Drive – want children to be safe; parent of 2; respect the choice to wear a mask for those that want to wear one; no longer need to wear them; silent majority wants to move on; masks cause more harm, germ ridden, kids constantly touching them, dirty/filthy, nothing but a face decoration; in the gym on the floor and on the ground; respiratory therapist for 31 years; N95 masks are not a option

to wear for long periods of time, my child will not wear one; serious unintended social/emotional consequences from contact tracing, segregating and masking children/adolescents, for virus with 99% survival rate; Dr. Rubin, Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, masks should not be considered necessary, time to get back to normal in school setting, COVID cases on the level of other seasonal viruses, cases down all over the country; ok to take masks off when CDC or media says so; need to learn to live with the virus, never going away; wash hands, keep sick at home, allow immune systems to do their jobs; allow children to get back to normal, before more damage is done; respect what anyone wants to do with their body for their safety, respect ours and our choice for our children.

At 9:04 PM the Board took a 3 to 5 minute recess.

At 9:09 the Board reconvened the meeting.

Krista Cooney, Magnolia Street – upsetting hearing stories of younger children; mother of high school student; it's not good, going to hurt them for a long time; what we're doing temporarily will not fix the long term, will cause more issues in the long run; recommendation is not the law; mandates are illegal and unconstitutional; parents best advocates for their children, not you; mandating my child to wear a medical device is breaking the law of the constitution, which you took an oath to uphold; you are liable and will be held accountable for actions; damage to children should weigh on your conscience; addressed concerns via email with back-up documentation, it was ignored, only response from high school principal and board secretary we are not going to entertain any of your conspiracy theories; have documentation to back-up my conspiracy truths; public officials to serve the people, not be condescending; not being observant; be removed from your positions; regardless of anti-science practices, has gone on too long; masks, tests vaccines and quarantining don't work; flow chart doesn't work; cause more harm; forcing mandates because you receive funding from state only if guidelines are followed; never about health only wealth, children as pawns; no longer be tolerated; how many lawsuits filed for mandating illegal masks; not right, reconsider. Thank you

Julia Westbrook, Sweet Gum Court – operating from a place of fear, that has negatively impacted my children, high school and middle school, teachers and their ability to connect, emotionally invest in the classroom; administration's stress in hearing parents disappointment in the district; amiss when young children afraid to interact with friends without a mask on, afraid of being ridiculed by teachers, staff and other students, or get a cold; psychological damage cannot be reversed; won't understand true impact until they are adults and the impact on society long-term; fear begets fear, like wildfire; one person believes something factually untrue, many behind them; educated/intelligent people here/listening online, willing to acquiesce like lemmings, just irrational, pay attention to mental/behavioral health of future leaders of the district and society; long-term impact. Thank you

Amy Karas, Locust Lane – 2 years difficult for all; concern my children/other children; last month son quarantined twice within 2 weeks, never had a positive result; constant interruption, detriment to learning and mental well-being; son struggling academically, difficult on him mentally/emotionally; purchased \$30 mask to show his mouth, made fun of, can see his mouth; a norm for kids, can't see faces; in January, notified 8 days after son's supposed exposure and pick him up; other time exposed, another vaccinated student exposed, but was allowed to remain at school and participate in extracurricular activities over weekend; son had to be picked up, wrestle wearing a mask; answer given was other student is vaccinated and wears a mask; son wears a mask; if you can give it and get it, why are vaccinated students being treated differently than unvaccinated; not fair; kindergartner, so excited to start school, has a lisp, covering her mouth and teacher's mouth, not helping her; quarantined prior to Christmas, missed holiday mart, holiday parties, due to sitting by someone supposedly with COVID; only person on bus required to quarantine; seats all around, not 3 feet apart; she had to quarantine, missed those events; cried saying she was sick, I told her she wasn't sick; what it has to be .....

President Iriti indicated her 3 minutes had expired.

President Iriti thanked those in attendance and for complying and acting with decorum, helped get through the evening.

President Iriti indicated that since there were approximately 20 or so in-person comments, Mrs. Geisler was asked to summarize the parent concerns from the email comments that were sent to and read by the Board. President Iriti asked Mrs. Geisler to read the names of the email comments and added the entire email comments will be included in the official minutes.

Mrs. Geisler read the following names and addresses;

Corinna Marshall, weeping willow dr.  
Kristen Feltz, Berkley Ridge Drive  
Liz Debowski, Rutherglen Drive  
Michelle Allan, Deerfield Ridge Drive  
Melissa Ott, Sterling Drive  
Danielle Goldstein, Walnut Ridge Circle  
Alyssa Archer, Granite Drive  
Vanessa Keller, Kingsbrook Drive  
Sarah Gardner, Walnut Ridge Cir  
Lesley Kunkel, Washington Pike  
Sarah Vierra, Nicole Drive  
Katie Grella, Sandstone Dr  
Julia Westbrook, Sweet Gum Court  
Kristine Makar, Walnut Ridge Circle  
Jocelyn Small, Oakridge Road  
Mike Barish, Gene Dr  
Danielle Kretschman, Battleridge Road  
Carrie Lemonovich, Christine Ct  
Ashley Humer, Hickory Heights Drive  
John Zelczak RRT, CPFT, Windsor Drive  
Molly Jenks, Walnut Ridge Circle  
Eric Chichester, Rutherglen Drive  
Tara Gatto, highland creek drive  
Shannon H., Lanesboro Lane  
Petra Husnajova, Wabash Ave.  
Danielle Puhatch, Newbury Highland Dr  
Email with 479 signature to make masking optional  
Danelle Diodata, McVey Street Ext.  
Eric Smith, (father of South Fayette student), Bower Hill Road  
Jody Restivo, Interlaken  
Tom McGuire, Kingsbrook Drive  
Kaitlin Cahill, Newbury Highland  
Jen and Dave Greenawald, Oakridge Road

Summarized main concerns from the above list of parent emails are below:

- Parental choice, made health decisions for their own children
- Covering facial expressions, teachers need to see children's facial expressions
- Mental health and well being of children; children struggling socially and developmentally
- Surrounding districts have masking optional
- Athletic events, no masks are worn
- Masks doing harm; germ infested, dirty
- Resume pre-COVID environment
- End contact tracing and quarantining
- Isolating students at lunch

- Stop segregating vaccinated and non-vaccinated students
- Cloth masks don't work
- Personal/political agendas
- Students low risk for COVID
- Students now fully vaccinated
- Thank you for your service
- Criteria for lift mask mandate?
- Numbers in county dropping

Three additional email comments:

Roxanne Lutz, Battle Ridge Rd, continue to follow local health guidelines, sees a lot of pediatric cases

Angela Thomas, Windsor Dr, test to stay, sent two links

Jayne Rapp, Sheffield Ct, done a great job, supports Board decision, continue with mask mandate until it is safe

The petition with 479 signatures will be included in the official minutes.

The following are the public email comments in their entirety:

To whom it may concern,

It is my opinion that we need to get rid of the mask requirement in our schools. There are many issues that threaten the quality of life, daily life and health of our students and Covid is not one of those imminent threats.

I believe that it is important for our talented teachers to be able to see the faces of the students. Teachers are on the front lines and are in a position to see if children are lonely, depressed, or just confused about subject material that is being presented. Teachers and peers can look at a face and see if someone is feeling depressed or disconnected and can reach out and make contact with that student. Having a child's face mostly covered robs the teacher of the opportunity to read the child's non verbal body language. It means that teachers can miss when students are confused about a math concept or when they are depressed or if they have some stressful things going on at home and need to be truly SEEN by someone.

I worry about the children we are forcing to hide behind masks. Children who aren't able to learn or show quietly that they are confused or sad because their expression is covered. Children who are anxious, children who are disconnected from their peers and feel disconnected from their community at school.

I worry about where we will be in 6 years when these young children are in high school. The effects of Covid on their health will likely be nothing but the long lasting effects of being disconnected and unseen with fears and stresses and feeling invisible every day behind a mask could be catastrophic for our community.

It's time to unmask and let the kids who need help be seen. A true pandemic could be coming and it's not Covid. It's a tidal wave of mental health issues, social disconnectedness and education issues resulting from isolating children, forcing children to cover their faces and strain their connection and communication with peers and teachers.

Please end the mask requirement. It's a hard decision but it's the right choice for our children long term.

Thank you

Corinna Marshall

weeping willow dr. Bridgeville

Good evening,

This letter is in support of our School Board & Superintendent, and how they have handled this school year to date.

The goal since March 2020 has been to get and keep our kids in school. That goal has been accomplished this 2021/2022 school year. We have not had 1 day of school cancelled due to Covid. Not 1 asynchronous day of school this year due to Covid.

This goal has been met thru the careful analysis by our Board & Superintendent of data, metrics & guidelines on the safest way to keep our kids in the buildings.

I personally know several Board members, and they are some of the most intelligent, analytical, upstanding people I know. They are making decisions 100% based on the safety of our Campus, and nothing else.

These are not "normal times", and our Board & Superintendent are navigating waters I don't envy. It is impossible to keep everyone happy. But they are doing their best to keep everyone safe. As they make decisions for the rest of the year, I will continue to trust their Leadership, and their use of data & science to back their decisions.

Thank you each for your hard work!

Jayne Rapp  
Sheffield Ct

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Dear School Board Members and Superintendent,

I hope this finds you all well.

It is time to allow parents' choice for masking in our schools. I understand policies were put in place early in the pandemic that were appropriate, but our policies such as quarantining and segregating at lunch and not letting kids swim in the pool for gym class are outdated. For example, I've been made aware that policies are inconsistent across schools. Why does my intermediate school student have lunch for 15 minutes but my middle school student gets to eat for half an hour? Policies are starting to not make sense.

We need to move on and progress in the districts approach to covid. Many districts have done so, and, honestly, I'm surprised that South Fayette has not done so.

Parents, bottom line, need to be allowed to decide if kids mask up at school, at special events, at sports, etc.

I will be at the school board meeting to support the parents that want this change too.

Thank you!

Julia D'Angelo

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Kristen Feltz, Berkley Ridge Drive

As the board reconvenes this month for committee and regular board meetings, please tell us you will be reviewing the districts health and safety plan tonight to make masks optional and a parental choice for our kids that goes into effect IMMEDIATELY WITHOUT DELAY.

Why are we waiting and why are we 10 steps behind our surrounding school districts ? There is no logical reason for South Fayette's continued masking policy of our kids when surrounding schools have made masking a parental choice and are not having any issues. There is no reason unless of course this is about funding and control. The masking of our children has to end.....Not next week, not next month, not at the end of the 9 weeks but IMMEDIATELY WITHOUT DELAY. TOMORROW!

I have 3 children in the district that play basketball. My family and I have been all over this county in recent days and weeks to neighboring schools for games and not ONE place mandates masks.

Ironically enough, I was at North Allegheny School District this past weekend and Upper St Clair School District today for hoops games. For two districts that have pending court cases regarding lifting mask mandates....very few had masks on.

We've been to Moon, Montour, CV, Cannon Mac, West Allegheny, North Allegheny, Upper St Clair and Trinity to name a few... all in the past month and not ONE required or enforced mask wearing. Everyone was free to mask or not as they pleased and most everyone did not wear a mask.

Contrast that with walking into our gym at South Fayette with signs on doors saying "no mask, no entry" and a big red sign near the gym entry saying "masks must be worn at all times" and to top it all off, a

security guard sitting there to make sure you have your mask on and who also walks around the gym telling people to place the mask on their faces properly. Talk about a police state. It's Ludicrous! The saddest thing is that when we go to away games, the opposing team...which is the home team, doesn't have a mask in site with the coaching staff or players on the bench but our poor teams still have to wear them....at an AWAY game....The coaches can't even coach without having to constantly pull their mask down to speak. It's the most embarrassing thing ever. Such a sad state of affairs....and for what reasoning?

It's way past time for this board to show some leadership and vote 9-0 to make masking optional for our children. They need their lives back.... It's time we give it back to them.

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Hello,

I would like to encourage, implore, and question why South Fayette school district has not yet started to consider or make plans to implement the test to stay program. It is a program that is backed by the Pa Association of pupil services administration and the PA dept of health.

<http://papsa-web.org/test-to-stay-forum-available-to-pa-school-leaders-december-5-2021/>

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Test-to-Stay.aspx>

While I understand everyone's perspectives and wants may be different, we should unite on the fact that everyone actually does want the same thing for our children and that is a safe, healthy, flourishing environment. We need to start as a community figuring out how we can provide that while also keeping our children in school where they learn best from qualified and expert teacher professionals, which is NOT me. The test to stay program is a way in which we can do that.

The article I posted above found that there are districts in Montgomery county, PA successfully doing this as well. And to my point, our school district has not put in any effort at all to my knowledge to even consider this as an offering. I will happily listen to those if I have missed exact reasons of why this is not an option and try to help come up with solutions because it is vital our kids are in school and further not being segregated by vaccination or exposure status and this should be considered as an option.

Finally, the CDC has come out saying that masks are only effective if wearing a N95. Further, in order for an N95 to be effective it must be fitted properly. Unless the school district is going to fit and provide a n95 to all teachers, staff, and students, then masks should be removed all together. Thank you for your time and consideration of these matters

Angela Thomas

Windsor Dr

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Liz Debowski

Rutherglen Drive

The mask mandate in Pennsylvania was lifted on June 28, 2021.

So why can't we as parents have the freedom to decide for ourselves?

Masks are doing more harm than go. Look at the science! Kids are least apt to catch the virus and don't get very sick. Plus wearing masks has long term adverse effects on personalities, ability to communicate, and confidence. It should be our right to decide!!!!

Families are and will leave the district if this doesn't change. That means the district loses money.

Just give us all the right to make our own educated decisions and give us our freedom back!

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It seems appropriate at this phase in the evolution of the COVID19 to consider when our school district may lift the mandatory mask mandate. Evidence suggests the virus is reaching its natural plateau, given it will always exist in some form. It is time that we react accordingly and resume our pre-COVID academic environment. If not now, then when? What is the district's plan to resume normality and where are the benchmarks?

Michelle Allan, Deerfield Ridge Drive

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I am a parent of 2 children in the district. I want to start by saying that I respect the CHOICE to wear a mask or anyone who wants to wear one. However, I believe the silent majority is ready to get back to normal life without masking and the time is NOW. I would also make a strong case these masks cause more spread of germs. Please use common sense and look at how many times kids touch their mouth and nose with these germ riddled things on their face. N95 masks may work but are NOT an option for children to wear for hours. My child will not wear one of these under any circumstances. Trust me, I have experience here as a Respiratory Therapist for 31 years and have fit tested and worn these things. Additionally, If these masks work for you or the teachers, why do the other kids need to wear them? Please don't say for the protection of others or the teachers. Choose to wear an N95 then or choose another profession. There are serious unintended social and emotional consequences from contact tracing, segregating and masking children and adolescents. For what? For a virus that has 99.9% survival rate. Dr. David Rubin, director at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said masks should not be considered necessary. Dr. Rubin recently suggested that it is finally time to start getting back to normal in the school setting, particularly since cases of COVID-19 omicron variant among children are more on the level of other seasonal viruses. Covid cases are down all over the country and masks are coming off everywhere. When will it be okay to take our masks off?? When the media or The CDC says it is?? We need to learn how to LIVE WITH this virus that is never going away. Wash our hands, keep the sick at home and allow our immune systems to do their jobs. The time is NOW to allow our children to get back to normal before more damage is done! Please know that I completely respect what anyone wants to do with their body for their safety. Respect ours and our CHOICE for our children.

Respectfully,  
John Zelczak RRT, CPFT  
Windsor Drive

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My name is Melissa Ott from Sterling Drive and I am submitting the following comment for this evening's school board meeting:

School Board Members - I am asking you to refocus your efforts on the education of our students as the health and well-being of our children is the responsibility of the parents, not the school board. We are responsible for making health decisions for our children. I am asking that the South Fayette School District end all contact tracing immediately because it is not serving its purpose and penalizes healthy children. Last week my high school student was contact traced, and once she provided the facts, I had contacted the administration to request that they speak with the teacher as the students had not been sitting according to the seating chart. After much investigation and effort, the student was allowed to return the next day but only after much effort on my part. I had a similar situation with my elementary student who was contact traced in the fall. After learning my neighbors who share a seat with him were not quarantined, I began to ask questions and we learned that seating charts were once again inaccurate. This is not the first time. I have heard countless stories of kids incorrectly contact traced, even on days they are absent from school. If the kids are required to socially distance and wear masks, which are debatable, it is time to end this overwhelming and erroneous effort. If the kids in the attached photo at the basketball game from February 11th can attend in this manor, and the band, orchestra, chorus, cheerleaders and other teams can travel to Disney World and return back with no quarantines or mandatory tests, than enough is enough and it is time for you to prioritize the education of our community and allow parents to be responsible for the health of their children. Clearly there are options for those who are concerned with sending their children to in-person school and out into the community, but the majority are waiting for you to provide the best education environment for our students like many other districts in the area. Thank you for your consideration.



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South Fayette School Board,  
School Board Members:

I am asking for you to remove the covid restrictions for ALL schools.

I am asking you to stop forcing the schools and staff to enforce segregation between vaccinated students and non-vaccinated students.

One example: A child gets sick with covid like symptoms. Those children who were “near” this child are now considered “exposed” under your rules. Those “exposed” children if having no symptoms and they are fully vaccinated against covid can return to school as normal but have to sit in a segregated lunch area that is reserved for “exposed” children.

Those children who have not been covid vaccinated are forced to stay at home for a period of 5 days from “said exposure”.

You require no proof of the child who had covid and forced these families and children into a frenzy of “exposure and segregation amongst their peers”.

In one instance that personally happened to our family, the “sick child” was found to just have strep throat. So, you disrupted the learning and social learning of 6 children for a child who had strep throat. When did we start quarantining for strep throat? Of course, no one thought to test this child for strep since covid is the only virus that exists in this world today.

Your rules and restrictions are disrupting the learning process and if we are following the science, masking and vaccines do not keep a child or any person from getting sick.

I ask that you kindly meet us in the middle, leave the masks and restrictions up to the parents. Let the teachers concentrate on helping our children learn the core subjects and less on punishing or sending our kids to the office for not wearing a mask properly.

My child comes home daily and tells me how the school nurse, a teacher, or staff member yells at her and her peers to pull their mask up over their nose because "NO ONE WANTS TO DIE TODAY". That is the message you are giving our students. That is the message that the teachers, staff, nurses are hearing from you. You have turned what used to be a nice school district into a paranoid, germophobic institution that feels more like a jail to students who are old enough to understand. For those who are too young and really have not had any sort of "normal" school year may God help them.

If you are unable to take your political agenda or your personal fears out of your voting process, then I ask you to please resign and let others who can separate personal from professional to take your place. Please unmask our children and please unmask them today.

Danielle Goldstein  
Walnut Ridge Circle  
McDonald PA 15057

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Dear School Board,

Please show me the reference science you are using to make these decisions about our childrens school and masks. I ask that you provide me with the "Science" behind your decisions?

Please provide me with letters from medical professionals stating that masking is stopping the virus from spreading in the schools?

Neighboring districts are following the "Science" and freeing their students from the confinement of a mask and having no greater illnesses without the masks. South Fayette is failing our children and our children are falling behind in learning. Teachers are paying more attention to your covid rules so they don't lose their jobs vs teaching to our children.

So please let me know when the masks and covid restrictions will be lifted and when our children can get back to their learning in a happy paranoid free environment.

Thank you,

Danielle Goldstein  
Walnut Ridge Circle  
McDonald PA 15057

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Alyssa Archer  
Granite Drive

I am unable to attend the meeting but wanted to voice my opinion on this topic. The mask situation NEEDS to be made an optional requirement. It is unnecessary, especially if the children are vaccinated. As an adult it's an option to wear it, why not for our kids? They play sports daily and have play dates with all of these kids outside of the classroom, all without masks on. Then they go to a classroom with 20 or less children and have to cover their face? It doesn't make sense. The fact that other surrounding school districts were able to make it optional proves that we can too. It is NOT A MANDATE in our state. The CDC stated that cloth masks don't even work, so why are we making our kids wear them? All summer at EDS they were not required, then all of a sudden on the last day they were. Makes no sense and I can tell you from experience if they wore them all summer VS not wearing them, it wouldn't have made a difference. Other states have never required children to wear masks. There are literally some kids in the United States that have never worn a mask to an activity or school. And they are fine. Why do our kids have to suffer with this nonsense? At the end of the day, if it was consistent across the board, I wouldn't complain. But that is the problem, it's never been consistent. It's always been determined based on who is running the show. We need to do better for our kids.

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To the Board Members of SF,

Veterans, active military, families and children of all those men and woman who sacrificed their lives and time for this country is who I'm standing with. For the constitution of this country. For you to have free speech. To be able to voice your opinion. For parents to raise their children how they feel is best. Let's

remember you are school board members. You did not fight for this country. You may have some insane educational background or an impressive resume but you did not fight for this country. If you did than thank you. But let's not forget your purpose which is to hear our opinions and vote without your personal agenda attached.

I have three sons two of which are currently in the district. In elementary school. Of those two children one is immune compromised. His GI doctor. Who is the director of Akron Childrens Hospital GI department. (Yes we drive to Ohio for every appointment) Ranked number 3 in the nation has continually told us not to mask him. That there is zero point to the masks. That my son will not thrive w a mask. It's more harmful to him to collect the bacteria from the mask than covid itself. Which by the way he's had. We all have. So do not tell me it's to protect the immune compromised.

Let's move on to Sunday. I think we can all say the super bowl is the prime example of how pointless masks are. That they are placed only for an agenda. 75,000 people gathered in the stadium not wearing masks. People who on tv ask us to mask up make post after post on ig and Facebook and there they were maskless. But you are making my children? Make that make sense. Again my husband didn't spill his own blood. Lose his youth. For you to tell me what's best for my child. That flag flies bc of men and woman like my husband. Not because of people sitting on a board. My children play three sports and don't wear a mask for one of them. So why do they for school? Let's not forget what the school system is actually for. Let's not forget the rights of parents.

My husband is honored to have fought in three combat tours. Fir the American people. For your safety on U.S soil. For his children and all children to have freedom and a better life. For your children to have a better life. Unmask our children. Giving parents the option to decide what's best for their children should not be an issue. It's our right to decide. It's what my husband fought for.

We are asking you to respect what he did for this country by respecting us as parents. Unmask our children.

Vanessa Keller  
Kingsbrook Drive

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As a mother of three daughters in the South Fayette district, I am asking that we remove masks and move to parents choice.

My daughters as well as their peers have suffered and been the guinea pigs throughout this pandemic. While I know South Fayette acted as best they could with the information we had in the beginning of this, we now know much more!!

Much more to be making better, right choices for my daughters and well as their peers.

The pandemic through us all for a loop. My daughters worked hard from home and have continued to do so while being masked at school. My daughters are tired of being masked.

My daughters want to interact with their peers and see their teachers whole face.

I hope that South Fayette will act in making the best decision regarding masks. It is time to let parents make this choice for their own family.

I am asking that we move to parents choice for masking at South Fayette.

Thank you,  
Sarah Gardner  
Walnut Ridge Cir

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The entire nation has realized the fallacies of mask wearing by ending their indoor mask mandates. This includes two bastions of authoritarian government, Washington DC and the state of California. There were 70,000 people in a roofed facility, unmasked at the super bowl this past Sunday. With this being said one has to wonder why the South Fayette school board has maintained this senseless policy. You the board are supposed to be non partisan, your actions speak quite differently. At minimum you need to state what metrics you are basing your decision on, and what metrics need to be met to reverse your decision. Simply stating that you collectively are ideologues, that are entrenched in the belief that ill fitting cloth masks are good for our children is not sufficient. You owe transparency to the taxpayers who need

to make major life decisions based, unfortunately on decisions made by this board. Will you continue this nonsense the rest of this year, what about next year? I can foresee the board claiming these cloth masks would work wonderfully to protect against a myriad of infections diseases. Parents have children starting kindergarten next year, they need to know if they need to move to a more rational school district, or get them enrolled in private school. Every other neighboring school district has valued parental choice over their own political beliefs. The time is now for you do the same. It doesn't take courage to mask a kindergartner, stop the political theater and do the right thing. You are on the wrong side of history and your actions will not be viewed favorably.

T Connolly  
3014 Willowbrook

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Dear SF Board members,

As a parent stakeholder in the district and as a school counselor at a local public district, I would like the opportunity to share my concerns.

The district's current health and safety plan is outdated. It's time to give families and options. It's time for students to have a better experience in the buildings.

Our young students belong to a demographic group at a very low risk and many students are now fully vaccinated. We are isolating and distancing students during the school day, in academics and lunches, but not at sporting events or extracurriculars. School districts right in our backyard are having success with different options and choices.

The issues with the current measures and mandates must take the following into consideration. How social distancing, not allowing children to play, or eat lunch together, will impair the social emotional development in our youth. For young kids, in particular, missing out on play and normal interactions with peers will take a toll on their cognitive development, social skills and a sense of morale. Isolation, distancing, and continued masking is catastrophic.

We are already seeing the adverse mental health consequences of social isolation, such as an increase in suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety among the teenage population. Students are suffering socially and developmentally. I see the struggles on a daily basis.

Mental Health service providers can not keep up with the need in our communities. The wait lists for a psychiatrist or therapist are several months long.

It is time to give SF parents and students a choice and drop the universal mask mandate and distancing. Update the health plan based on current data in our community.

Respectfully,  
Lesley Kunkel  
Washington Pike

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Thank you for protecting kids

As the parent of an elementary school student and an intermediate school student I want to say thank you for the safety measures you have had in place during this pandemic to protect the kids. I hope they can stay in place for the rest of this school year as the masks are yet another layer of safety for everyone.

Thank you,  
Parent & South Fayette resident,  
Justin Conley  
Longview Circle

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Hello,

My name is Roxanne Lutz, I live on Battle Ridge Rd. McDonald PA 15057. I have lived in this school district for a number of years and I have 2 children that attend South Fayette.

First, I would like to thank you for your efforts that you have made during this pandemic. Following local health department guidelines based on the climate of the disease within our area had been the appropriate response. Leaving medical decisions up to medical professionals has been the appropriate response.

Recently I have seen that tonight there will be many individuals speaking out against children masking indoors at school. I am emailing to ask that you continue to follow local health department guidelines and require a mask indoors for children. Covid is still here and it is still dangerous.

I am a nurse at our local pediatric trauma hospital and I watch every shift as our emergency department overflows with pediatric cases. Our seating in our Emergency department is so regularly full that we have now opened our lobby for people to be able to sit and wait.... With wait times regularly reaching 8+ Hours.

I know masks can be an annoyance, but they are not harming your children. There is absolutely no science behind these ridiculous claims. And for the parents listening, please keep your sick kids home! Consider your children's health... and the health of our employees tirelessly trying to make it through every shift short staffed, overwhelmed, and burned out.

Sincerely,

A tired pediatric nurse

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Good evening.

First, I would like to thank the parents who showed up tonight to even further express a need for some direction on the future of South Fayette regarding Covid19 regulations. I was unable to attend but stand with them in asking you all to please provide a "return to normal" expectations. I do understand and appreciate that at the beginning of the pandemic, we did what was best to maintain a school year, but just as quickly as you put measures in effect, I ask that you take them away now that more evidence and data is available.

As many districts around us are demonstrating by having a "parents choose" option for masking, there is no increase in severe cases, schools are remaining open, and students are able to benefit by feeling less restricted.

Vaccines are available to all and there is no longer a justified protection for the masks in our schools. We all know very well, that most of these children are together (maskless) after school, at sporting events, at the mall, at the movies, at friends houses, at practices, at restaurants, etc. This creates an unwelcoming environment when they are forced to wear in school.

Please consider the bigger picture and provide me with the right to do what I feel is best for my children in making masking optional immediately.

Thank you,  
Sarah Vierra  
Nicole Drive

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Good afternoon,

Thank you for your service to our community. In regards to the school mask-mandate, I believe it is time for this to be lifted.

1. Infection rate continues to go down.
2. Those who do report infections are reporting very mild symptoms.
3. A multitude of students participate in sports and extracurricular activities where masks are not required, so what is the rationale of mandating it for school?

A number of surrounding districts have already made masks optional (and have ceased to contact trace!!) with no significant increase in cases. Even today, the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh announced it was lifting mandates for all of its' churches and schools affecting thousands of people.

Masks should be optional. It's time for you to lift this mandate.

Thank you,

Katie Grella, Sandstone Dr, McDonald, PA 15057

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My voice for tonight.

All

Parents should have the right to make medical choices for our children. It is time to end your universal masking policy today.

The amount of restrictions placed on children is in no way whatsoever commensurate with their risk of Covid. Their lives are interrupted, obstructed and the fear you are placing in their minds by blindly mandating masks will have a lasting mental and social impact.

Now, you are limiting the Camp-Kon-O-Kwee event to a day. That is utterly ridiculous. No rational reason why, just fear. If people are afraid, don't send your kids. If staff doesn't want to go, don't go. But let the parents send their kids to the real 6th grade experience. So much has been taken from them already.

How is it ok to be at basketball games, screaming for the home team but not ok in math class. The rules are hypocritical. The cheer team is cheering in competitions without masks. But foreign language, where you need to see the teacher's mouths - mask up.

I followed all the rules in the beginning. But now we have science, data and vaccines. Let me make my decisions for my children. Let other parents make theirs.

Julia Westbrook

Sweet Gum Court

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Dear South Fayette School Board,

My name is Kristine Makar. My address is 4451 Walnut Ridge Circle. I am sending this email so the school board will end the mask mandate and make masks optional for the students within the South Fayette School District. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court removed the masking mandate in December of 2021. Canon Mac School District lifted their mask mandate and made masks optional on December 13, 2021. Pine-Richland School District are mask optional. Universal Studios Orlando has changed their mask face covering optional. How many people attended the Super Bowl with no masks? Covid numbers are declining. As an educator within another school district, I see first hand the physical, psychological and emotional effects of our poor children having to wear masks all day long. I have spoke to many teachers and parents that have the same fear that this is and will cause mental health problems among students. Masks for children appear to do more harm to their development than provide effective safeguards against spreading COVID. Data collected by COVID education groups including school superintendents found that schools and school districts without mask mandates had lower case rates than schools with mandates.

Please end the school mask mandate and make this optional!

Thank You!

Kristine Makar

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To: Superintendent Dr. Miller, Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Deichler and South Fayette School District Board Members:

I am requesting that the School Board remove mandatory masks for all students and make masks "optional" for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year.

On Friday December 10, 2021 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court threw out the statewide mask mandate for Pennsylvania schoolchildren. Surrounding school districts in Allegheny County have since lifted their mask mandate. Moon Area School District for example, has since made their district OPTIONAL for masking.

Please hear our voices tonight at the school board meeting and through this email. WE (South Fayette Parents) WANT A CHOICE WHEN IT COMES TO MASKING OUR CHILDREN.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Small

Oakridge Road

South Fayette Resident  
Mother of a South Fayette Kindergarten and Third Grader

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Dear School Board,

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposal to continue universal masking of our children. Currently our children are masked for the entire day in school, including bussing to and from, with no breaks. There is a proposal to continue to force everyone to wear a mask. This should not happen! There is ample evidence, including from the Allegheny County Health Department, that masking in school does not prevent the spread of COVID. Additionally, there is very little evidence that COVID is even spread from child to child while in school. Many educators and child psychologists around the country have also come out against masking children due to the detrimental effects it is having in their development, especially at younger ages where facial expressions and lip reading is vital to their education and growth. Finally, South Fayette time and time again this year, has proven that the mask mandates is only for show to appease a vocal contingent of the community. At any indoor sporting event, spectators are unmasked. While they represent the community at large, there are also several staff members at these events that are unmasked (whether they are working at the time or not is irrelevant, if they are employed by the district they should follow and enforce the policy at all times). Throughout the COVID pandemic, you, the South Fayette School Board, have fallen back on the position of "follow the science", "CDC guidelines", and "ACHD guidelines". If you are to be consistent, then you would not force masking, but you would remove the mask mandate and make South Fayette School District mask optional. Many of our students attend school affiliated functions (sporting events, concerts, etc) where masks are optional, and there have not been cases of widespread COVID infecting large swaths of the community. It is time for South Fayette to do what is right for our children and remove the mask mandate.

We request that you make masking be family choice. If a family would like their child masked, they may continue to do so. If staff would like to continue to wear a mask, they may continue to do so. We need to stop thinking that no harm is caused to our children by this continued process. Our children are suffering and we won't know the full extent of the harm for many years.

In June of 2021 the Pennsylvania Mask Mandate was lifted statewide. Many of our neighboring school districts have allowed the school to go to Parent Choice on masks. What is the criteria that South Fayette is using to continue the forced practice of masking? What is the metric we are trying to achieve that will lift the school mandate? We need to be realistic that these children are interacting continuously the moment that they leave school and moving about mask free with students outside of the school grounds. It is illogical to continue to force such a practice at school.

Mike Barish  
Gene Dr  
McDonald, PA

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My name is Danielle and my daughter will be starting kindergarten in the fall. I am writing today because it has been brought to my attention that the school is mandating masks. I want it to be optional to the parents whether they choose to mask their children or not. My children have not been masked at preschool nor have they social distanced, and we've only had normal colds in my house. I worry more about my young children wearing masks and weakening their immune systems than I do about Covid. I'm a nurse and I understand the seriousness of Covid. However, the kids are not getting as sick as the elderly. There is no reason why our kids can't have a normal school experience. They need the social skills and the emotional stability in which it provides. "Social distancing" is just a form of isolation. If you are afraid of Covid, mask your kids. The rest of the population should not be punished because of others fears. Our kids need to grow and interact with other kids. They need to sit together and play, and eat, and talk. They need to see each other's faces. I am very passionate about this and will continue to fight for my kids to have a NORMAL life. I pay so much money to this amazing school district, please don't make me regret it. For the sake of our children, please make this optional for parents.

Thank you for your time,  
Danielle Kretschman  
Battleridge Road

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Good evening,  
My message for the school board is simple. It is time to put the masking decision in the hands of parents. I do not deny any parent who wants their child to be masked the right to make that decision. My rights to send my children to school unmasked should also be equally honored and valued. If not now, WHEN???

We must move forward. It's time for the Board to act and allow parental choice with regards to the masking policy.

Carrie Lemonovich  
Christine Ct

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To Whom it May Concern,

I children attending school at South Fayette Intermediate and Middle school. I truly hope you are considering lifting the mask mandate. At this point, the science is showing that cloth masks are NOT stopping the spread of Covid. It's as simple as that. If they are not stopping the spread, then why are our children wearing them?

Respectfully,  
Ashley Humer  
Hickory Heights Drive

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Members of the Board,

My name is Molly Jenks and I am a parent of two middle-school children and one high school child at South Fayette School District. I'm writing to ask that you please remove the mask mandate in our schools as soon as possible. I realize that masks MAY have been effective in slowing the spread, however, the availability of vaccines for children 5-18 and readily available COVID-19 testing have changed the need for a masking requirement. We have also seen a sharp decline in the number of reported COVID cases throughout Allegheny County, supporting the needs for the district to reexamine our COVID-19 policies.

I recognize that the choice to vaccinate is based on individual preference. So why is masking not an individual choice? I have chosen to vaccinate all three of my children and taken the necessary precautions to reduce our exposure to COVID-19. Why is it also not my choice to send them to school in a mask or not? Unless mandated by the order of the Pennsylvania secretary of health, governor and other governing authority, it is my opinion that we should take action to remove the masking requirement at South Fayette.

Sincerely,  
Molly Jenks  
Walnut Ridge Circle  
McDonald, PA 15057

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Hello,

My name is Eric Chichester father to Cole (6th Grade) and Colin (3rd) Chichester. I want to express my support to remove the masking requirement in the schools. There are schools across the country that have lifted these requirements months ago. I see first-hand the delays in learning it has caused in both my boys. This is especially true with my older son who is in the learning support group. He has regressed over the last two years, and it affects his speech and learning abilities.

I ask the board to lift this mandate immediately.

Sincerely,

Eric Chichester  
Rutherglen Drive

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Hello

I'm reaching out to please ask the consideration of making masks optional.

I have a first grader who has not experienced a NORMAL day yet in the elementary school and a 4th grader who prays for a back to normal school day .

There are so many other school districts that have made this an option (and are doing just fine) and I believe that we are responsible enough as parents and an outstanding district for this to happen responsibly.

Please let us parents make the decision if we want our children masked. My kids have had enough.

Thank you

Tara Gatto

highland creek drive

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Dear School Board Members,

I am a South Fayette graduate and a parent of 2 students who are currently in 4th and 9th grade. I am extremely concerned for my Children's health and well being! Today my youngest daughter went to the nurse because she couldn't breathe. She has reoccurring panic and anxiety attacks.. all of which started after masks were mandated in school. I beg of you to please make masks optional In South Fayette! Cases of Covid In Allegheny county are dropping, the majority of teachers, parents, grandparents and students are triple vaccinated. There is no reason why we shouldn't have the choice to mask up or not. I know that this school district has received federal funding for masking our children. It sickens me to think that this district, our super intendant, our principles and our school board care more about money than our children's well being. Other neighboring school districts have made masking optional and I see no reason why we shouldn't have that choice as well! Sadly it seems you all have your own agendas, but we the parents are on to you and are sick of it and will not give up until our children can breathe freely the way that God intended them to!

Thank you,

Shannon H.

Lanesboro Lane

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Hi,

I am unable to attend the meeting tonight due to work. However, I would be there if I could. I support the people that are attending that are trying to make masks optional, or recommended, just like it is everywhere in the area. I do not wear a mask anywhere, literally the only place is when I pick up my son from parent pick up. I also do not want my son wearing one, especially during gym class. The best thing I saw was on the south fayette elementary twitter account, where there was a picture of a person, a man and a woman, giving a speech WITHOUT A MASK, and all the students are wearing a mask. How is that fair? Please make it optional for the kids. It's 2022. Covid isn't going anywhere.

Thank you,

Mom of Lukas Husnaj, 2nd grade.

Petra Husnajova

Wabash Ave.

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Danielle Puhatch

Newbury Highland Dr

Dr. Miller and South Fayette School Board Members,

I would like to express my gratitude to you for the time and effort you have invested in our district for the betterment of our children's education. My husband served on a local school board, so I personally know how a role on the school board can be challenging when complicated issues are on the table. Thank you for your continued dedication to the health and safety of our students, staff, and the residents of our district during the pandemic. I appreciate that you have made tough decisions specific to our district without being swayed by the decisions of neighboring districts.

Unlike other districts and buildings, South Fayette has not experienced a closure or district-wide interruption in education due to Covid this school year which has allowed our students to be in the building for in-person learning. In-person learning has been the most effective, least restrictive education model, even with masks, for the majority of our students and families during the pandemic.

Should an optional masking policy be considered, I would ask that the School Board delay initiating the policy until the beginning of the 4th quarter. By doing so, it allows sufficient planning time for those considering homeschooling or other education settings without significant disruption to their current education. Beginning an optional masking policy in the 4th quarter also allows for the majority of cold/flu season to be over (limiting confusion of symptoms), and allows for the majority of indoor sports & activities to be over. It also allows our students and families with medical needs an appropriate amount of time to consider the options for what is best for their health with the current Covid data.

Again, I thank you for your time and dedication to serving our children & community.

Danielle Puhatch

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Good Evening,

I am writing in regards to the mask mandate that is still ongoing in the district. When is this going to end? The state lifted the mandate and I think we should do the same. The majority of surrounding schools no longer have mask mandates. My kids get extremely excited when they have away games and tournaments at schools that don't require masks to be worn. The choice should be optional and not mandatory. Please make this something that parents can decide for our children.

Thank you,

Danelle Diodata

McVey Street Ext.

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Good evening,

We are no longer in a state of emergency. We have overwhelming evidence that shows what works and what does not. And this is now turned into a constitutional issue of parental rights here at South Fayette. The State of Pennsylvania agrees with me. So much so, that the General Assembly went to great lengths to ensure people have constitutional rights to their own health decisions.... specifically to the egregious mask mandates that this board holds onto.

Myself and the majority of parents at South Fayette would agree that this school board does not have the power to withhold the rights of the very parents who pay the taxes that fund this district.

If you truly respect parental rights, if you truly want to end the anxiety students face everyday, if you truly want to stop the falible contact tracing this district follows, if you truly want to end the shaming of healthy children being made to eat lunch on a stage in front of their classmates, and if you truly value the students over your own personal opinions.. you will end the universal masking and contact tracing...

allowing parents to make decisions for their families again.

If you do not... we now know its all about power.

Thank you,

Eric Smith

(father of South Fayette student)

Bower Hill Road

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Hi-

Thank you for all you do for our community.

As the parent I would like to respectfully request that the mask mandate be repealed, it should be a choice, not a requirement.

Thank you for the consideration.

Jody Restivo

Interlaken

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Dear South Fayette Administrators and School Board Members,

I am writing regarding the ongoing mask mandate within the South Fayette School District. Whereas I can certainly understand the challenges the district faced in 2020 and 2021, we are now coming into year three of restrictions that have made our children endure virtual learning, missed activities and events, and the normal daily interactions that need to be had between classmates. At some point, I believe we need to pay attention to the negative consequences that will result from the restrictions imposed. I have a sophomore at SF High School, and I know I can only speak for her. She's has been extremely frustrated and upset about having to wear a mask every day. She has challenges with anxiety, and I can see it is taking a toll on her mental health. She often says the majority of kids do not even wear the masks properly, and it is hard to breathe with a mask on for seven hours a day. I promised her I would petition the school board on her behalf to see if any changes could be made.

I do not doubt that South Fayette has the very best intentions for our kids. It is an excellent district and I have always been extremely pleased with the way the district has done business. That said, in keeping with the tradition of doing what's right, I believe the district should implement a new policy that would provide a mask-optional environment for the students moving forward. At the very least, I would like to request a reasonable answer as to when our kids will be allowed to unmask. I believe the vast majority of parents and students are entitled to know what metrics will be used in order to set a potential timeline for when this might happen.

Best regards,

Tom McGuire

Kingsbrook Drive

McDonald 15057

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I am sending this to voice my concern over continuing to mask our children. When will it ever end? This has impacted THREE school years for our young children. Please help me understand your reasoning for not making masks optional?? This would allow those that think it protects their children to continue wearing them, while allowing our constitutional rights to protect those that do NOT want their children to wear them. Please give me scientific evidence that shows it prevents the spread!!!! And give me your top 5 reasons for continuing a mandate that no longer exists according to our state of PA! These young impressionable ages do not get to see their classmates and teachers faces all day except for at lunch for the past 3 years. Furthermore, my 3rd grader literally chews/sucks on his all day long. It's totally disgusting. Not to mention unsanitary, all the while not protecting him from the spread. At this point, EVERY SINGLE PERSON I KNOW, and I know a lot of people all across the country has had Covid. It's completely ridiculous to continue to abuse our children and make them cover their faces up for 8 hours a day. Keep in mind, these kids are playing sports many nights a week and all weekend NOT masked. Make it make sense. Currently, my 5th and 3rd grader both do in-house basketball UNMASKED, Collier rec basketball UNMASKED, 5th grade travel basketball UNMASKED, in-door soccer league UNMASKED and winter workout baseball UNMASKED. With other South Fayette children, which consists of usually 2 nights during the week, then Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Needless to say, we are busy and come into contact with a lot of people. And another note, in November, my 3rd grader still got Covid from someone IN school, and gave it to myself, husband, 11 year old son and 2 year old daughter all whom presented with symptoms 5 days after my 3rd grader started. And NO ONE else we know had it at that particular time, therefore he had to have gotten from someone in school, proving masks do not help with the spread. Again, please make it make sense. I look forward to your response.

Thanks,  
Kaitlin Cahill  
Newbury Highland

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Dear Dr. Miller and South Fayette School Board Members,  
We are writing to request a change be considered for contact tracing. My daughter has been sent home from school 4 times in the past 3 months to quarantine due to close contact with someone who tested positive for Covid 19. Each time she was sent home, she did not have any symptoms of Covid, nor did she get sick.

She is missing too much in person learning and also missing out on some fun activities during her senior year.

This last quarantine, she missed out on an activity that she had been looking forward to very much. She was away with the Music department and slept in the same bed as a girl who had Covid, and she did not get sick. I asked if I provided a negative Covid test if she could come back to school and I was told that South Fayette was not testing out of quarantine at this time. However, I heard that another student was able to test out of quarantine and attend the Music Trip. This student was vaccinated and my daughter is not.

We believe the current policy creates an unfair environment for unvaccinated students. My daughter was at school for 2 days AFTER being "in close contact", and was not sick at all. She was sent home on the third day and has been fine since. We strongly feel that the students should not be sent home due to "close contact" or that they should have the same courtesy as vaccinated students, and be able to "test out of quarantine."

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jen and Dave Greenawald  
Oakridge Road

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Leslie Burns  
2041 Sterling Drive

Please strongly consider discontinuing the mask requirement and the contact tracing. Enough is enough. Masking should be a parental decision. Period. Also, masking kids while playing sports due to contact tracing is unsafe and unacceptable. There is very limited, if any, data to support any of the guidance given to schools from the Allegheny Health Department. It's time to move forward.

In Dr. Millers opening update statement she stated we are at a death rate of 1 out of 100. According to Allegheny county health department the total deaths in this county are 3055 with a population of just over 1.2 mil. That math is not 1 out of 100. Not 1% death rate as she said. At 1% death rate we would be near 12000 deaths not 3055. If data/ statistics are going to be used please use the correct numbers.

Leslie Burns

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There were no additional comments at this time.

Hannah seconded Burroughs on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Network Systems Administrator Rob Warfield, and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval of a Fair Market Value (FMV) 1:1 Lease of 1,000 student laptops for the Intermediate School and 80 staff laptops Districtwide at an annual amount of \$164,245.40, for fifty-one (51) months with Dell Financial.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Ainsworth seconded Brinsky on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Middle School Principal Dr. Erin Crimone for Board approval to hire Kristin Fagan as a Long Term Substitute Grade 8 History teacher in the Middle School, at the rate of \$160.00 per day, effective retroactive to December 1, 2021.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Brinsky seconded Burroughs on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Intermediate School Principal Tom Kaminski for Board approval to hire Ashley Iagnemma as a Long Term Substitute Grade 4 teacher in the Intermediate School, at the rate of \$160.00 per day, effective February 16, 2022.

Voice Vote – Patankar, Welch, Brinsky, Hannah, Burroughs,  
Ainsworth, Iriti – All Yes  
Iagnemma – Abstained

Ainsworth seconded Brinsky on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval of an intermittent FMLA leave of absence request for Melissa Dennison, Accountant, effective retroactive to February 2, 2022.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent and Director of Finance Brian Tony for Board approval to hire Kim Hartnett as a Substitute Staff Accountant, effective retroactive to February 11, 2022. She will work approximately 24 hours per week at the rate of \$35.00 per hour.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Ainsworth seconded Brinsky on the recommendation of the Superintendent and High School Principals for Board approval to permit James Hausman and Maureen Pedzwater to accompany 75 students to participate in the 2022 Pennsylvania Technology Student Association (TSA) State Competition being held at Seven Springs Resort in Champion, Pennsylvania from Wednesday, April 20, 2022 through Saturday, April 23, 2022. Students would be responsible for making up all school work during their absence. Appropriate adult to student ratios for supervision will be assured by the administration. The cost of the trip includes travel, lodging, meals, and conference registration fees and are included in the 2021-2022 budget.

And on the recommendation of the Superintendent for Board approval to permit Dr. Matt Callison, Director of Innovation, Strategic Partnerships, and Instructional Technology to attend the national Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) conference in Nashville, Tennessee, from Monday, April 11, 2022 through Thursday, April 14, 2022. The cost of the conference includes registration, travel, lodging, and meals, and is part of the 2021-2022 budget.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Iagnemma seconded Burroughs on the recommendation of the Superintendent, Athletic Director Mark Keener, and Head Track & Field Coach Scott Litwinovich for Board approval to permit the Girls 4x200 Meter Relay team and student athlete Jake Borgesi to travel to New York City, New York, to participate in the New Balance National Indoor Track & Field Championships from Thursday, March 10, 2022 through Sunday, March 13, 2022. Students would be responsible for making up all school work during their absence. Appropriate adult to student ratios for supervision will be assured by the administration. The cost of the trip includes travel, lodging, meals, and registration fees and will be paid for by the Boosters.

Voice Vote – All Yes

Brinsky seconded Hannah on Board approval that as of February 16, 2022, the District will not require asymptomatic staff or students who are close contacts to quarantine, regardless of vaccination status. Students and staff who are close contacts may elect to stay home and quarantine for up to 10 days and at which point they will return to school unless they show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19. If they show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, they will comply with the current isolation guidance. Students who are close contacts and elect to quarantine and students who must isolate shall not be marked absent if they fully participate in their assigned remote instruction. Absences for staff who elect to quarantine or staff who must isolate will be dictated by existing labor/employment agreements.

And direct the Superintendent to revise the Health and Safety Plan for consideration at the February 22, 2022, Board of School Directors meeting to include masking optional when the Allegheny County Health Department's 7 day rolling average for COVID transmission is identified to be at the "moderate" or "low" transmission rate, as recommended by the ACHD, and to make any other necessary document changes to be consistent with this directive.

Roll Call – Patankar, Welch, Brinsky, Hannah, Burroughs,  
Iagnemma, Iriti – All Yes  
Ainsworth – No

Patankar seconded Iagnemma to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Voice Vote – All Yes

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Cynthia Geisler, Board Secretary