

August 24, 2021

SLSD Parents/Guardians and Staff,

On Monday August 23, the Southern Lehigh School District School Board approved an update to the district's Health and Safety Plan. The updated document can be found on the [SLSD COVID-19 Resources Webpage](#). A summary of the updated mask requirement from the 2021-2022 SLSD Health and Safety Plan appears below;

**Effective August 24, 2021, masks are required for a period of five weeks in all indoor spaces and on buses. This requirement may be reauthorized at any time by the Board of School Directors.**

Starting today, all students and staff will be required to wear masks while indoors for a period of five weeks. The Board of School Directors may reauthorize that mandate depending on a variety of factors. Students and staff will not be required to wear a mask while outdoors. Please know that this decision was not made lightly. Over 700 individuals attended the 5-hour virtual meeting the Board of Education held on August 23rd and over 50 community members spoke at that meeting. In fact the Morning Call covered the meeting via the following [link](#).

We thank all of the community members who have reached out to express their opinions. Voicing differing opinions is a characteristic of strong community involvement. It is the American way. We recognize, welcome, and respect that there are many different opinions in our school community about what should and should not be done in regards to health and safety planning in this COVID world we live in.

While this situation continues to lack a one size fits all solution there is a single unifying theme that we continue to hear from the overwhelming majority of our community, that is a strong desire that all students need to be physically present in school 5 days per week for in-person learning. As educators, we collectively want this for our students and this masking update is in line with the guidance from federal, state, and local health partners. The Board's masking mandate provides our students with the best possible opportunity for reducing potential disruptions to in-person learning from quarantine situations.

As an important note we also wanted to outline is the process for any parent/guardian seeking a mask exemption for their child. A request for a mask exemption for a medical or disability-based accommodation, for any student with an existing IEP or Section 504 accommodation in place, will be reviewed with your child's IEP or Section 504 team, in accordance with the procedural requirements of the IDEA and Section 504, and determine the need for the requested mask exemption. For students who are not currently identified with a disability under IDEA or Section 504, the request is a "child find" trigger; those requests should be sent to the school psychologist and principal in your child's school. Those requests will be reviewed and if determined to be a viable request we



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will then seek parental consent for an evaluation, in writing. Once parental consent is received the school psychologist will a) conduct an evaluation, b) make a written determination with the multidisciplinary team of whether an impairment “substantially limits a major life activity” exists, and c) provide prior written notice of that outcome and of any plan to accommodate if a disability is indeed substantiated. If, on the other hand, the multidisciplinary team cannot substantiate the need for the mask exemption, the district will notify the parent accordingly, in writing, through an IEP Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) of Section 504 Prior Written Notice (PWN).

The strongest school systems together with the strongest communities in America pull in one direction. It is important that we continue to pull together as a school community for all of our students' best interests. Keeping our schools open every day will continue to require a comprehensive community effort regardless if you agree with a particular viewpoint or not. Once decisions are made, we need to progress to ensure our children enjoy the best school year possible. As close to normal as possible.

Wishing you all a wonderful school year filled with excitement and learning!

Respectfully,

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