



Wissahickon School District

True Blue with a Heart of Gold

August 9, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Please see below for some important updates concerning the opening of the 2021-22 school year.

- At the 8/23/21 public Board meeting, I will be recommending that we amend our Health and Safety Plan to require universal masking, Grades K-12, for both students and staff. There will be opportunity for the Board to discuss the matter, as well as for public comments, before a vote is taken. As you know, we have in place now a universal masking requirement in Grades K-6, and a combination of factors is driving the new recommendation. Not only are two recently revised agency guidelines (both CDC and Montco OPH) now recommending the K-12 approach in the face of the aggressive “Delta” variant, but new rules regarding which students would have to stay home from school in quarantine status have convinced me that the benefits of masking in these older grades now outweigh the objections. Details of these new quarantine rules can be found in our FAQ webpage (see below), but suffice it to say here that our #1 goal is to keep students and staff safe AND to have as many students learning, IN-PERSON, as possible. Universal masking, K-12, however controversial it may be, simply gets us much closer to both goals.
- A comprehensive and living “Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQ) webpage on a wide range of school opening matters can be found [here](#). We will update this webpage regularly in the coming weeks as new questions/information arise. I would like to highlight one topic in particular—that is, what happens if a student refuses to wear a mask. See the FAQ webpage for details, and I truly hope we can come together and avoid any such situation, but I want to assure you that we will proceed if the need should arise with discretion and compassion. We are, after all, dealing with students. But we will also be firm. Masks will be required in school. All students are expected to follow school rules; it is not possible to pick and choose which rules to follow. We know the masking requirement has generated controversy among adults in the community. We cannot control that, but what we can do is pledge to do everything we can to keep every single one of our students out of the crossfire and as protected and comfortable as possible.

In closing, I have one last thought to share. Disunity is draining and discouraging for people of all ages. While COVID-19, and its evil new child Delta, have teamed up to put our country under a cloud of anger, fear and distrust these past 18 months, I think it might be time to start coming together as a school community and keep our eye on the prize. That is, adults can agree or disagree with decisions made along the way, but after they’re made, I am hopeful we can prioritize a sense of community and unity. We can certainly all agree that our students are our most precious resource; I say we come together to make THEIR school year, imperfect as it may be, as fun and rewarding and productive and safe as possible.

Warm regards,

James A. Crisfield

James A. Crisfield, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Twitter: @WSDSuper
Email: jcrisfield@wsdweb.org