

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Monday, July 28, 2020  
Emergency Remote Meeting**

---

Due to the state of emergency declared by Governor Sununu regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, and the subsequent Emergency Order #12, Chair Guagliumi determined that the physical presence of a quorum within the time required for School Board action was not reasonably practical, and therefore, the members of the School Board participated remotely.

**Present:** Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Schneider, Nunez, and Rothhaus. Also present were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio, and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

**1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chair Guagliumi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Participation Guidelines for Remote Meetings**

Chair Guagliumi stated public comments could be sent to [publiccomment@sau26.org](mailto:publiccomment@sau26.org) or by going to sau26.org where a meeting link was provided. She said all comments would be read and written into the record but noted the name and address of the speaker had to be provided.

**3. District Policy on the Use of Masks by Students and Staff**

Superintendent McLaughlin commented that the issue of masks had been a difficult one for so many people because there were differing strong opinions on both sides. He said the issue for schools was fairly uncomplicated in that if they were going to meet the challenge of providing a re-opening that brought students and staff back to the campus in the midst of a viral pandemic then safety protocols would have to be put in place. Superintendent McLaughlin reminded people that they did not know what it would be like to teach school in a pandemic because the schools closed two weeks into the pandemic. He added that the School District had worked very hard to create a model of reopening that would provide as much safety as possible, knowing they could not be flawless on the subject.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated he had sent out a memo to the community which indicated that the Merrimack School District strongly encouraged the use of masks. He said if they just relied on the science, the use of masks would not be an issue, however,

it was an issue and the issue was one of enforcement. Superintendent McLaughlin added that there had been no executive guidance from the Governor regarding the subject and it was up to each School District to make up their own requirement and then find the tools to enforce the requirement. Superintendent McLaughlin said they were working very hard to find a strategy that they all knew worked.

Chair Guagliumi stated there were three options the School Board could consider and possibly some others.

Superintendent McLaughlin said it was one thing to say: “make the masks happen” but it was a very different prospect to provide the teachers with the tools to make it realistic. He said the matter at hand was the education of the students whether it be remotely or in school when possible and there was no time to fight over the issue of masks. He added the issue had always been surrounding enforcement.

Superintendent McLaughlin said he had consulted with a variety of people to try to understand what tools they might have at their disposal to support enforcement. Further, Superintendent McLaughlin shared that RSA 200:39 was a statute from 1971 that, in short, provided an opportunity for schools and their designees (teacher’s) to remove a student from a classroom if they presented a hazard as defined by the local School Board. He added that there should be a policy adopted by the local governing body that would use RSA 200:39 as the basis for its position on the matter.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented that the District’s legal department had crafted two versions of the proposed policy. He further commented that there would be a total of three options presented at the meeting relative to the use of masks. He added one proposal was a strong recommendation that students wear masks.

Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud the proposed policies as described below:

**Option 1: Emergency Policy on Personal Protective Measures:**

Face Masks and Cloth Face-Coverings

Findings

As recently as July 17, 2020, the Governor extended the State of Emergency declared in Executive Order 2020-04 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension has declared that: the Center for Disease Control [“CDC”] reports that COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person, that COVID19 is currently spreading very easily and sustainably, that COVID-19 is spreading more efficiently than influenza, and that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to COVID-19 by taking the following steps:

- Maintain good social distance (about six-feet).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, and if soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face-covering when around others.

The Board makes the same findings, that COVID-19 is easily spread from person to person and that the steps recommended by the Governor are reasonable measures to be taken by community members, staff, and students to reduce the risk of a debilitating and potentially deadly disease.

The Board finds that within the Merrimack School District bounds there have been persons who have tested positive for the Coronavirus. The citizens of the District also travel outside of the geographic bounds of the District and interact with citizens both within and outside the state. Merrimack also has a significant number of citizens from other states stopping within Merrimack as they travel to other destinations. The suburban nature of Merrimack increases the necessity for protective measures to prevent the hazard of contagion and spread of the virus.

The Board also finds that remote learning has not been as effective a tool for educating students in the Merrimack School District as in-person education in the schools and that second to student and community safety, it is important that the District reopen its schools to students as soon as prudently possible.

The congregation of students and staff in school buildings presents an increased risk of exposure to, and spread of, COVID-19. The proper use of medical masks and even cloth face-coverings can reduce the hazards presented by educating students within a building and will allow for broader educational access to in-person instruction. The failure to use a mask or face-covering in the context of a school creates a hazard to the individual who declines to use the mask and a hazard to others who are proximate to the student/staff member.

The District has a duty to provide for the health and sanitation of its schools. See NH RSA 194:3, VIII. This duty includes “the daily administration and provision of educational services to students at the school facility including . . . staff, student, and parent safety. ” See RSA 194-C:4, II(j). These requirements are reiterated in state regulations.

State law mandates that whenever any student exhibits symptoms of contagion or is a hazard to himself or others, he shall be excluded from the classroom and his parents or guardians shall be notified as soon as possible.” See NH RSA 200:39 (emphasis added).

The Board finds that scientific research has emerged that students age ten and above present the same risk of viral spread as adults. To some extent, there may be reduced risk of viral spread by students below the age of ten.

## Mask and Face-Covering Requirements

On the basis of these findings, the Board implements the following policy directives:

### General Requirements

All staff shall wear medical masks or cloth face-coverings in the school building and on campus when they are less than six-feet from another person or moving in common corridors.

Classes shall be configured so that when possible, educators may be able to have a socially distanced location in the room for general instruction.

All visitors on campus shall be required to don a mask when they are less than six-feet from another person or moving in common corridors.

No person, including a student, shall be required to wear a mask if their disability or a medical condition prevents them from doing such.

Staff (including contracted service providers) who work with deaf students or hard of hearing students, students learning to read, and students who rely on lip-reading shall wear clear masks that enhance service provision.

The District shall endeavor to maintain a supply of masks for students and staff who do have access to a mask or cloth face-covering.

The CDC guidelines on masks and cloth face-coverings shall be made available to all staff.

Masks shall not be required during outdoor recess or outdoor physical education provided social distancing is in place.

### Kindergarten through Third Grade

**Superintendent McLaughlin commented that the below section needed to be changed to “Pre-Kindergarten through Third Grade”.**

All students in pre-kindergarten through grade three shall be taught the proper use of a mask. Students in pre-kindergarten through grade three shall not be required to wear a mask or face-covering but shall be encouraged to wear a mask when social distancing is less than six-feet. Nothing herein shall prohibit a parent from requiring that their child wear a mask, however, enforcing that requirement shall be the responsibility of that child's parent. Parents of students in pre-kindergarten through grade three shall inform the District in writing if they do not wish their child to wear a mask.

Any student who is deemed by school staff to present a risk of contagion or a health hazard to themselves or others by virtue of not wearing a mask shall be removed from the classroom setting or not permitted to enter the classroom setting and the parents shall be required to pick up their child. See NH RSA 200:39.

#### Fourth Grade through Twelfth Grade

All students in fourth grade through twelfth grade shall be required to wear a mask or face-covering in the following circumstances:

- When entering or exiting a school building.
- When in the corridors or transitioning from class-to-class.
- When they are less than six feet from another person.
- When on a school bus or other student transportation.
- When in such other settings and environments as the building principal deems appropriate provided the students have been notified of the requirement.

Any student in the circumstances listed above who is not wearing a mask shall be asked to wear a mask. Any student who is wearing a mask in an improper fashion shall be asked to wear their mask properly, that is, safely covering both mouth and nose. Any student who refuses to do such, shall be deemed a health hazard to themselves and others, shall be removed from the school building, their parent/guardian shall be contacted and required to take their child unless and until such time as they are willing to comply with the face mask or cloth covering requirement. See NH RSA 200:39.

#### Duration

This is a temporary policy based on a health emergency. This policy shall remain in place until such time as the Governor rescinds his Emergency Order, modifies his order to eliminate the face mask recommendation, or the Board determines that there is no longer a substantial risk that unmasked persons will present a hazard to themselves or others in the school setting, whichever event is the latter. The Board shall review this policy regularly to determine whether it remains appropriate.

#### Legal References

NH RSA 194:3, VIII, Powers of Districts, available at:  
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/194/194-3.htm>

NH RSA 194-C:4, II(j), Superintendent Services, available at:  
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/194-C/194-C-4.htm>

NH RSA 200:39, Exclusion from School, available at:  
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/200/200-39.htm>

Emergency Order #2020-04\_, available at:

<https://www.governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/2020-04.pdf>

Emergency Order #2020- 15, available at:

<https://www.governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/executive-order-2020-5.pdf>

Other References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.htm>

Pediatrics, Klara M. Posfay-Barbe, Noemie Wagner, Magali Gauthey, Dehlia Moussaoui, Natasha Loevy, Alessandro Diana and Arnaud G. L'Huillier, "COVID-19 in Children and the Dynamics of Infection in Families," (July 2020).

### **Option 2: - Emergency Policy on Personal Protective Measures:**

Face Masks and Cloth Face-Coverings **[All Required]**

#### Findings

As recently as July 17, 2020, the Governor extended the State of Emergency declared in Executive Order 2020-04 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension has declared that: the Center for Disease Control ["CDC"] reports that COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person, that COVID19 is currently spreading very easily and sustainably, that COVID-19 is spreading more efficiently than influenza, and that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to COVID-19 by taking the following steps:

- Maintain good social distance (about six-feet).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, and if soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face-covering when around others.

The Board makes the same findings, that COVID-19 is easily spread from person to person and that the steps recommended by the Governor are reasonable measures to be taken by community members, staff, and students to reduce the risk of a debilitating and potentially deadly disease.

The Board finds that within the Merrimack School District bounds there have been persons who have tested positive for the Coronavirus. The citizens of the District also

travel outside of the geographic bounds of the district and interact with citizens both within and outside the state. Merrimack also has a significant number of citizens from other states stopping within Merrimack as they travel to other destinations. The suburban nature of Merrimack increases the necessity for protective measures to prevent the hazard of contagion and spread of the virus.

The Board also finds that remote learning has not been as effective a tool for educating students in the Merrimack School District as in-person education in the schools and that second to student and community safety, it is important that the District reopen its schools to students as soon as prudently possible.

The congregation of students and staff in school buildings presents an increased risk of exposure to, and spread of, COVID-19. The proper use of medical masks and even cloth face-coverings, along with other measures can reduce the hazards presented by educating students within a building and will allow for broader educational access to in-person instruction. The failure to use a mask or face-covering in the context of a school creates a hazard to the individual who declines to use the mask and a hazard to others who are proximate to the student/staff member.

The District has a duty to provide for the health and sanitation of its schools. See NH RSA 194:3, VIII. This duty includes “the daily administration and provision of educational services to students at the school facility including . . . staff, student and parent safety. ” See RSA 194-C:4, II(j). These requirements are reiterated in state regulations.

State law mandates that “whenever any student exhibits symptoms of contagion or is a hazard to himself or others, he shall be excluded from the classroom and his parents or guardians shall be notified as soon as possible.” See NH RSA 200:39 (emphasis added).

### Mask and Face-Covering Requirements

On the basis of these findings, the Board implements the following policy directives:

#### General Requirements

All staff shall wear medical masks or cloth face-coverings in the school building and on campus when they are less than six-feet from another person or moving in common corridors.

Classes shall be configured so that educators may be able to have a socially distanced location in the room for general instruction.

All visitors on campus shall be required to don a mask when they are less than six-feet from another person or moving in common corridors.

No person, including a student shall be required to wear a mask if their disability or a medical condition prevents them from doing such.

Staff (including contracted service providers) who work with deaf students or hard of hearing students, students learning to read, and students who rely on lip-reading shall wear clear masks that enhance service provision.

The District shall endeavor to maintain a supply of masks for students and staff who do have access to a mask or cloth face-covering.

The CDC guidelines on masks and cloth face-coverings shall be made available to all staff.

Masks shall not be required during outdoor recess or outdoor physical education provided social distancing is in place.

#### Mask or Face-Covering Required

**All students shall be required to wear a mask or face-covering in the following circumstances:**

- When entering or exiting a school building.
- When in the corridors or transitioning from class-to-class.
- When they are less than six feet from another person.
- When on a school bus or other student transportation.
- In such other settings and environments as the building principal deems appropriate provided the students have been notified of the requirement.

Any student in the circumstances listed above who is not wearing a mask shall be asked to wear a mask. Any student who is wearing a mask in an improper fashion shall be asked to wear their mask properly, that is, safely covering both mouth and nose. Any student who refuses to do such, shall be deemed a health hazard to themselves and others, shall be removed from the school building and their parent/guardian shall be contacted and required to take their child unless and until such time as they are willing to comply with the face mask or cloth covering requirement. See NH RSA 200:39.

#### Duration

This is a temporary policy based on a health emergency. This policy shall remain in place until such time as the Governor rescinds his Emergency Order, modifies his order to eliminate the face mask recommendation, or the Board determines that there is no longer a substantial risk that unmasked persons will present a hazard to themselves or others in the school setting, whichever event is the latter. The Board shall review this policy regularly to determine whether it remains appropriate.



### Legal References

NH RSA 194:3, VIII, Powers of Districts, available at:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/194/194-3.htm>

NH RSA 194-C:4, II(j), Superintendent Services, available at:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/194-C/194-C-4.htm>

NH RSA 200:39, Exclusion from School, available at:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/200/200-39.htm>

Emergency Order #2020-04\_, available at:

<https://www.governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/2020-04.pdf>

Emergency Order #2020- 15, available at:

<https://www.governor.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt336/files/documents/executive-order-2020-5.pdf>

### Other References

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.htm>

Superintendent McLaughlin stated the main difference between the two policies was that all students, including pre-kindergarten through grade three would wear a mask and it would be at all times; noting it would apply to students and staff.

Chair Guagliumi asked if there were Board members who had questions or comments.

Board Member Schneider commented he felt the difference between the two policies was that what the younger grades would need to do differently was removed. Superintendent McLaughlin replied the School Board had the prerogative to also add that “masks shall be worn at all times and in all places.”

Vice Chair Barnes asked if lunchrooms would count as a place masks were required unless someone was sitting down and eating. Superintendent McLaughlin replied that had not yet been determined as the issue of congregating was a significant one and the administrative team was still having discussions.

Vice Chair Barnes asked if there was a possibility of having a policy that could sustain itself for things such as flu season for future years. Superintendent McLaughlin replied they were working on a policy regarding contagious illnesses that were not COVID specific but would address how they would respond as a school system to all types of things.

Board Member Nunez asked if the policy was adopted would it mean 100% “in-school” presence from the first day of school or if it would still be a hybrid approach. Superintendent McLaughlin replied the model they put forward was a hybrid model and the policy merely addressed the very real safety issues that they were trying to put in place for the times when students were physically in the schools.

Board Member Nunez asked if there would be a gray area for those students who could not wear the required mask, noting someone with anxiety might not necessarily fall into the bucket of needing it based on the verbiage that she heard, and someone might feel very claustrophobic wearing a mask for that duration of time. She asked if those decisions would be determined on a per student basis. Superintendent McLaughlin replied the purpose of the mask requirement was to keep all of the children safe. He said the community had to make a decision on how much its willing to invest in the safety of the students and in supporting the School District to do that. Further, Superintendent McLaughlin said teachers should not be put in a position of determining what was or what was not a good reason not to wear a mask.

Superintendent McLaughlin said there were clearly reasonable times when the wearing of a mask would not be appropriate, noting such a time would be if someone were a severe asthmatic. He added that he would welcome the Board providing him with as much specificity as it deemed appropriate while keeping in mind that they could never come up with every example of what could be a reasonable disclaimer from the policy.

Board Member Nunez suggested that the requirement to wear a mask or the need not to wear a mask should be put into the student’s IEP’s (Individualized Education Plan) and 504’s where applicable.

Chair Guagliumi commented that a simpler solution might be to add verbiage that said: “exceptions should be directed to building leadership to be handled on a case-by-case basis.”

Board Member Rothhaus commented that she had consulted with her healthcare provider who informed her that she had concerns about pre-kindergarten through grade 4 children wearing masks because they would touch there face too many times throughout the day which would be counterproductive.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out that the families needed to work with the School District on the sole objective of trying to reduce the likelihood of transmission.

Vice Chair Barnes asked the Board which policy they wanted to revisit at the next meeting.

Board Member Schneider commented that he had concerns with enforcement because there were so many differing views. He further commented that whatever one person believed they still had to think about what the people around you are concerned about. He said he preferred the policy that was less restrictive on the younger students and more restrictive to create a culture for the older students.

To Board Member Nunez's point, Board Member Schneider also said that he would prefer not to call out IEP's and 504's explicitly and allow the parents to work with their students.

Board Member Rothhaus commented that she too felt the less restrictive option for the younger students with a more restrictive policy on the older students.

Board Member Nunez commented that she was also in agreement but felt it was important to include verbiage surrounding working with certain families whose student may not be able to wear a mask.

Vice Chair Barnes commented she was in favor of the majority of the Board member's comments.

Chair Guagliumi commented she too liked the less restrictive policy as it was more reasonable. However, she noted she wanted to do more research on how the policy would affect the little ones.

Chair Guagliumi stated the next reading would be heard on August 10<sup>th</sup> which gave the community ample time in which to provide feedback. She said it also gave parents the time to practice with their younger students on wearing masks appropriately.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented that the following evening Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell would join him for a virtual Town Hall meeting in which he was hopeful to answer some of the community's questions.

#### **4. District Policy on the Use of Masks by Students and Staff**

Vice Chair Barnes read aloud from public comments which were received during the course of the meeting as summarized below:

Carrie Arquin-Newton, 4 Reese Drive

I want to thank the District for giving parents a choice in how their children go back to school. I also want to urge our community to insist that masks be worn by students and teachers if the six-foot social distancing cannot be maintained. I believe children will benefit from returning to school in-person but I want every precaution taken to keep my

daughter safe. The CDC has made it clear that right now social distancing and/or masks are our best precautions.

Carolyn Herald, 31 Valley View Drive

Masks are a very simple way to mitigate the spread of the virus. There is no evidence that any other one device can keep staff, and students safe. While there is no vaccine, a mask is a necessity for schools to open.

Justin Hanson, 45 Mallard Point

The science says wear a mask. Masks are new but not challenging once normalized.

Snehaprabha Snashidhara, 37 Augustus Circle

Does the Board have a plan for kids who have parents who are at higher risk to contract COVID?

Zachary Oser, 4 Haines Terrace

I recognize that this is not an easy issue to address. It is my hope that you choose to enforce the wearing of masks in all circumstances, including sitting in classrooms. If you choose the lesser option for the younger children, will you find a way to prevent anyone who contacts these students from also coming into contact with older students?

Taryn Swenson, 38 Marty Drive

I am greatly concerned about the encouraging of face masks being used in schools for children. School, as a hybrid environment, will be a mental distraction and challenging enough without something covering their face all day long. They do not have the ability to learn and focus while covering their nose and mouth. It is not a natural feeling. Even if they could keep it on they will be constantly touching it which means they are not focusing on the lessons and, therefore, negating any protection it supposedly provides.

Daniel Fournier, 42 Berkley Street

How come Merrimack did not require masks for school reopening and mostly all other surrounding towns are mandated?

Donna Talbot, 5 Bryant Circle

Will Merrimack be willing to change their mind from encouraging mask use to a mask mandate before the start of school so kids that choose to go to school can be as safe as possible?

Alex Latzko and Bridget Boyle, 37 Greatstone Drive

I have three children in the Merrimack School System and honestly, I am scared about the conditions for opening without proper social distancing and absolutely consistent mask wearing, given the current conditions, it's not if but when the schools become a hot outbreak but when. Unless Merrimack goes all-in on distance learning as opposed to the stop-gap from March, I may as well pull the kids out and let them forage on the internet and repeat their current grade once school resumes post-vaccine. Even if COVID-19 shows lower morbidity for children, it is still both potentially fatal to them and unlike the common cold or flu, it shows long-term systemic depredation in a significant percentage of younger patients. Recovery from COVID-19 can take a long time, even in young adults with no chronic conditions. (CDC website provided)

Is the town prepared for the long-term effects on both student health and the certain disease transmission to older and fragile members of their families? Maybe as an adult, I can deal with twenty years of lung or liver issues but children are at risk for an unknown significantly longer time period. We must be led by science and not partisan politics when reopening the schools.

Meaghan Shepard, Incoming Junior

Over the past week, I have collected just under 500 signatures on a petition to require masks in the School District. Many students and parents are concerned about going back to school because masks are only strongly encouraged, which increases the risk of students, staff, and parents of contracting COVID-19. As stated from the last Board meeting on July 13<sup>th</sup>, the best known and most readily available mitigation strategies are social distancing, masks, and hand washing. In addition, the reopening Board presentation also states that the proceedings from the National Academy of Science state that transmission via people with no symptoms or during the few days before symptoms are apparent is a primary driver of the spread of COVID-19. There is also a Johns Hopkins study which believes in the power of masks. I would like to state that in a study things are not believed but proven and secondly if the reopening presentations' information is correct then why is the District choosing to not require masks when they are proven to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Matthew Coyne, 22 Bradford Drive

What happens if a teacher or a custodian tests positive for COVID-19.

Tim Burns, 35 Old Blood Road

The science is indisputable that temperatures above 100.4 indicate some level of infection for some type of virus or infection. The survey disproportionately showed that parents want temperature checks. This process needs to be executed by members of the District or some other independent entity and not left to parents to self-select. I respect the parents and their integrity but this can't be an honor system as it leaves too much up to individual interpretation. The survey also showed that parents are willing to volunteer. This may provide the staffing required to check students prior to getting on the bus or allowing them in school. There are a number of online background check tools that can be utilized to screen volunteers. I would be glad to develop the process and protocols.

Lisa Martinho, 5 Shore Drive

My daughter goes to James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and is in the sixth grade. My question is about parents who are choosing the remote learning option. If it is the case that more children are staying home, will the children who want to go every day be allowed if the numbers work out that way?

Catherine Bowler, 8 Jade Road

If the School District can require a dress code then they most certainly can require face mask wearing. I hope that you will reconsider your decision about the wearing of masks in Merrimack Public Schools. A lot has changed since the decision was made to "strongly encouraging" but not "requiring masks" including more scientific evidence that has come out to show that masks are one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of COVID-19. There has been at least one study showing that tweens and teens may transmit the virus more than other age groups. Almost all stores across the state are now requiring individuals to wear masks. The District can come up with reasonable accommodations including not mandating masks wearing for students who are unable to wear them for medical/behavioral reasons or for children in grades 2 or below and incorporating mask breaks throughout the day. History will look back on this and you will want to be on the right side standing strong and protecting the residents of Merrimack.

Troy Trudel, 19 Derry Street

With all due respect, there are no both sides to the mask topic. Masks have been proven to stop the spread of the virus and there are no adverse reactions to mask wearing. We need to stop the "both sides" rhetoric when our children's and community's health is involved.

Linda L'Ecuyer, 7 Page Drive

I would like to know how enforcing the mask policies are any different from enforcing the hat wearing policy and the dress code policy. Can it not simply be enforced the same way.

How is it easier to enforce the mask policy only if students are closer than six-feet away rather than wearing it all of the time.

When will the School Board be returning to meet in-person rather than remote meetings?

When will the teachers of Merrimack be provided with all of the new information you have given here.

Mark Heimberg, 7 Linda Lane

To open schools without mandating masks, which are proven to work, is to put students and teachers at risk and that is not in the best interest of our schools and our community. Many students and teachers already have compromised health and this puts them at risk at orders of magnitude greater than their peers and colleagues. In our educational environment, we focus on equity and inclusion. This is in direct contrast by not enforcing the use of masks to protect those at greater risk. If we are unable to mandate and enforce mask usage, it tells me that schools are not ready to reopen for in-person learning.

Sherrie Trythall, 15A Harris Avenue

I have a grandson that my husband and I are raising. He is in the elementary school and since he started pre-school he has managed to pick-up everything going through the school, colds, strep throat, and the flu. We have worn masks from the beginning of the pandemic and have limited contact. Our grandson has been staying and we try to avoid going to stores with him. There is no perfect solution right now but at least on the home front, there is more control over how many people are exposed. With physical school, there will be many variables, especially in an elementary school. I don't see the point of opening schools, even in the short-term and I don't think it's worth the risk.

Melinda Hewitt, 106 Wilson Hill Road

I find it difficult to say as a parent that I am fully on-board with any one of the suggested mandates, although, I agree at the very least, pre-kindergarten through grade 3 should not be required to wear a mask. We have not heard any details as to what recess will

look like and how it will even be possible to keep kids socially distanced. I feel as though if they are outside then social distancing is not as critical and they should not be required to wear masks there.

I have some concerns with children having to wear masks during recess or during any type of physical activity but we have not heard any details around what that looks like yet. In my opinion, this fall teachers should be considered essential employees, just as grocery workers, retail store clerks, etc. have been required to wear face-coverings, I believe that teachers and staff should also be required to do so during the day when they are in school with the students.

Sabrina Gaska, 19 Maidstone Drive

If masks are being required why are we even doing hybrid? Neither policy presented voids in the mask usage so sending all kids to school seems to be appropriate.

What data are we waiting for? Our current data already shows COVID cases incredibly decrease in New Hampshire and hybrid/masks are still being required. What exactly is the school waiting for?

Myself and others feel that decisions are made without much public participation.

Danielle Fasquelle, 46 Hansom Drive

What qualifies an "as risk" child under that code to be removed?

Rob Faichney, 18 Fairway Drive

I was really disappointed in the suggested mask policy and after listening to the meeting I fully support the less stringent model.

At 9:15 p.m. Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to adjourn.

**The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.**