

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
November 15, 2021**

Present: Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Rothhaus, Board Member Hardy, and Board Member Barnes. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen, and Student Representative Vadney.

Board Member Peters was excused from the meeting.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Yarlott was excused from the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Guagliumi called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Guagliumi pointed out that the School Board would accept public comment via email and to do that members of the public could send emails to publiccomment@sau26.org.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Robert Reisman, 8 Iris Drive stated his child is having a successful year. He supports strengthening the mask protocol. He feels the energy that is uniting behind the welfare of students.

Joanne Grobecker, 27 Craig Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I want to thank the district for the focus on literacy and handwriting as a way to address learning loss from a pandemic and strengthen skills for all kids.

Thank you to every board member and member of administration for enabling our students to have a positive school year. Thank you to every teacher, therapist, and para for all you do to teach our children in a caring environment.

I was pleased to see that the district website (sau26.org) now has a Curriculum & Assessment tab on the homepage. I was happy to see all the assessments given are listed in an organized and easy to read document. I applaud the district for putting in writing on this page that “Note to parents: You may request copies of your child’s assessments. STAR is a quick diagnostic assessment and does have a parent report that can be printed.” The transparency from administration is appreciated and helps parents be better partners in their child’s education. I appreciate that the curriculum section of the website is beginning to be updated and the math curriculum has been posted. I look forward to seeing the reading and writing curriculums posted.

The district is piloting a handwriting program in certain elementary school classes. I urge the district to implement a research based handwriting program in all elementary schools. In 2019 only 38% of 4th graders in NH could read proficiently (source nces.ed.gov nations report card). Imagine what that number is after a pandemic.

Mastricola is implementing a reading intervention for every single student in first and second grade using structured literacy programs. I am pleased to see these programs being used in general education to benefit all students. All students have access to phonics and phonemic awareness programs at Mastricola. I would love for the district to adopt a uniform structured literacy program so all students can learn how to read.

I am here for a strong public education system that benefits all kids.

Thank you to teachers and therapists for all you do every day.

Ken Martin, Woodward Road stated the academic recovery programs are working for his son. He is supportive of the teachers' contract.

Lisa Mungovan, 14 Lamson Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)
Could the School Board please remind families and students to wear masks on buses? My students tell me they are rarely worn. I know drivers must pay attention to driving over masking. But I have seen my partially vaccinated children get on the buses in the morning and end up sitting next to or near fully unmasked children. Thank you!

Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle supports eliminating the mask opt out option due to the recent increase in covid cases. She highlighted the importance of keeping children in school and the shortage of substitute teachers.

Jennifer McInnis, 8 Evergreen Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)
First, I want to express my appreciation for the hard work and dedication of all the staff, faculty, administrators, and school board members in these difficult times.

I support the mask mandate in its current form, with community transmission and percent positivity rates of testing as high as they are. CDC research shows that schools with mask mandates are less likely to have clusters of outbreaks, and our own neighbor district, Bedford (SAU 25) had a dramatic decrease in cases in the high school when a mask mandate was placed due to high cases. Thank you for your time.

Beth Grady, 15 Parker Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)
I am writing to express my concern over the exponentially growing Covid numbers within the schools. As of Friday, November 12, 2021, there were 51 active cases. 51! I wanted to do a comparison of districts nearby to see how our numbers compared. Well very unsurprisingly, the districts with a mask mandate had a much lower percentage of active cases. I know that Merrimack likes to claim that we have a mask mandate, but we simply do not. There is an opt-out choice making it not mandated. Please excuse me if the current student enrollment for the districts below is off a bit. While looking for this data I found slightly varying numbers but were all in the same ballpark and all numbers came from the same source. The Active Covid numbers are accurate as they came directly from each school's Covid Dashboards.

As of November 12, 2021:

No Mask Mandate, or "Opt Out":

- Merrimack: 51 Active Cases out of approximately 3,755 students
- Bedford: 56 Active Cases out of approximately 4,437 students

Mask Mandates:

- Nashua: 40 Active Cases out of approximately 11,072 students
- Manchester: 109 cases out of approximately 13,255 students

This data shows that Nashua, a district nearly three times as large as Merrimack has less cases. And Manchester, almost 4 times as large as us has just over twice the number of cases. These numbers speak for themselves.

I believe the School Board has done their best to try to find a middle ground to appease parents both in favor and against masks, which seemed logical back in September when numbers were much lower. It is no longer logical. It is time to reconsider Merrimack's current mitigation strategies-especially the mask policy. The School Board always said they would revisit the mask mandate regularly and make changes as needed based on numbers. Clearly now is the time. Numbers have NEVER been this high in schools, and they are increasing exponentially. Our current practice is not working. I have listened to multiple meetings of parents discussing mental health due to masks. Wearing masks does not negatively impact mental health, it is the isolation that does. More and more students are being isolated at home due to Covid. This is what is impacting them. Missing out on crucial instructional time and time with peers is unhealthy. Wearing masks will help bring them numbers back down and bring students back to the classroom.

I teach in a district in MA which has, as all MA schools have through at least the end of January, a mask mandate. I have never once heard a child in my class complain to me about wearing their mask, and I teach 6 and 7 year olds. The parents don't complain either. They respect the policy. Do you know how many active cases we have right now in my district? 1. Yes, 1. We only have 597 students in the school, which makes Merrimack about 6 times larger. 1 to 51 where Merrimack is 6 times larger....again it doesn't add up!

With vaccines now available for ages 5-11, many students are getting vaccinated. Hopefully the numbers will start coming back soon and a mask mandate will no longer be necessary, but until then please revisit your policy. No one is asking for a permanent change, we are just asking for logical changes when needed based on current numbers. Let's do all we can to keep children safe and in schools where they belong. Thank you.

Angelique Lippmann, 8 Owls Court (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)
I am writing to ask you to keep the mask mandate and remove the "opt-out" option for masks for December. While I am aware some classes only have a few opting out, there are several who have half the class opting out. I have been made aware that in some of these rooms with high "opt-out" rates, there is an increase in covid spread and quarantines. As of today, 51 students in Merrimack are positive for Covid, another 51 are out quarantining, and 69 students are excluded awaiting testing. A total of 171 students are not in school in Merrimack according to the Covid Dashboard. I have been told that since Merrimack is not live streaming to these students who are home (as they are in Manchester), these students are not receiving any direct instruction and are missing out on a lot of school. Especially worrisome are those siblings of positive cases where they have to quarantine 20 days while their covid positive sibling only misses 10 days of school. I personally know several people who have this situation going on in Merrimack. I teach in Manchester and even as a large city, our positivity rate is far less. The same is true with Nashua. In both of these larger communities, schools are showing less Covid spread within the classrooms. The reason for this is clear, they have mandatory masking with no choice to opt out. In Manchester we also have weekly voluntary pool testing for students and staff, and rapid tests available at all times at each school for students and staff.

As a teacher who goes from class to class in my position I see hundreds of students a day in their classrooms, and the masks are working and not one child has ever complained to me about wearing them. They are happy to be in school and seeing them in person in school everyday is so important as we are playing catch up to fill in the gaps of what the past two years of interrupted schooling has done. We are in school everyday and learning, and masks do not get in the way of that learning at all. I am so grateful to see Merrimack students going on field trips again and having a somewhat normal year again, with the help of masks to keep them there. However, several people I know have missed out on these field trips due to quarantining. As we are seeing these increasing numbers in Merrimack schools and not in Manchester and Nashua schools, it is clear that their mask policy is working better than ours. They have no opt-out option. Where germs spread are in the classrooms. Please as we approach winter let's keep our kids in school and keep the mask mandate and take away the opt-out option. Otherwise the numbers will keep rising and more of our kids will be home quarantining, missing out on instruction, field trips, and more which will certainly impact their mental health.

Jennifer Jobin, Merrymeeting Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Thank you to all faculty, staff, administrators, and Board Members of the Merrimack School District for your continued hard work this school year. It is greatly appreciated.

As a parent of a student in Merrimack schools, I am writing to ask members of the School Board to continue to rely on data and science for your decisions regarding mask use. According to the district's COVID dashboard, as of Friday, November 12th, there were 51 students who were positive for COVID-19. This number is the highest it has been this school year. As people gather for the upcoming Thanksgiving and winter holidays, it is possible that this increase in cases may continue. I request that you continue the current mask policy and consider temporarily changing the policy to include mandated masks for all students and staff until cases decline to an acceptable number. My number one concern is to have schools remain open so that my child, and all Merrimack students, may continue to attend in-person. Like all parents, I look forward to the day when I can safely send my student to school without a mask. Unfortunately, with positivity rates as high as they currently are, this is not the time to make that change.

I am writing to you today to PLEAD with everything I have to reinstate the mask mandate. My youngest is in 1st grade at MES. We have been over vigilant doing absolutely everything we can to keep her safe during this pandemic. She has severe asthma which means she often ends up getting pneumonia from the common cold. She has been hospitalized 5 times in her 6 years of life, and, in addition, has had 3 bouts of pneumonia.

Thursday and Friday November 5th and 6th, she was exposed to Covid by a child whose parents opted him out of the mask rule. We were notified Monday November 9th. We woke up Tuesday November 10th and tested her as a precaution. Her test was positive before the control line even had a chance to process.

Since that day, we have had to have a televisit with her pulmonologist in Boston at Mass General Childrens who immediate put her on oral steroids Wednesday night.

By Thursday mid-day she was gasping for air. I was forced to give her 2nd dose of steroids early in addition to a double dose of her rescue inhaler to prevent an ER visit.

Meanwhile, both my daughters are on IEP's. Neither have been given the opportunity to remote learn or zoom in to their services without my requesting it first.

Because of this, my older daughter, who is on the autism spectrum, is forced to quarantine for 20 days. 20 days with no schooling. 20 days with no services.

This is unbelievably unacceptable. The fact that you have allowed yourselves to be bullied into a mask opt out despite that your 1st priority is the safety and health of our children.

I am baffled and frankly angry beyond belief that we are faced with this situation. Honestly, I blame those of you who voted for the opt out. I blame you for my child's struggle to BREATHE. Her need for expensive prescription steroids, her need to be monitored 24/7.

Something HAS GOT to be done. Children's and teacher's health needs to be first priority above and beyond someone who wants to flex their "rights" to expose others just to prove a point.

Do the right thing. What you know you should. You MUST keep these children and staff safe. Please.

Bryan Townsend, 5 Merrymeeting Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I am writing to urge you to impose a mandatory mask policy. Prior to the start of the school year, a vocal minority of parents urged this Board to allow for an "opt-out." Their primary argument was that the risk of spread amongst children was low. In just a few months since this Board chose to allow for "opt-outs," Covid-19 cases in our schools have exploded. At the three elementary schools alone, there are currently 61 active cases, all but 3 of which are students. At last check, there are currently 125 total active cases in Merrimack, meaning that half of the total cases in Merrimack are our elementary school students. Our own son's classroom currently has 3 active cases. There is no question that the number of Covid-19 cases in our schools dwarfs those from last year when this Board instituted a *mandatory* mask policy. To say this is just a coincidence ignores all facts and logic.

We are in the home stretch. Our elementary students now have the opportunity to begin the vaccination process if their families choose to do so. I would urge the Board to reinstitute the mandatory mask policy so that we may get through the winter safely, without adding to the clusters in our classrooms.

Kathy Komar, Belmont Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

Let the parents worry about our own children and you worry about yours. Masks don't work.

Naomi Holter, 10 Everest Drive supports all comments for mandatory masking given the current increase in covid cases.

3. RECOGNITIONS

No recognitions to announce.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATES

1. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen reported school level budget meetings were completed. Budget meetings with school administrators will begin tomorrow. He will present the 2022-2023 budget to the School Board on December 6.

He congratulated the Merrimack High School Interact Club for supporting the Merrimack community through volunteering time at the Reeds Ferry Elementary School Fall Festival, the Merrimack Rotary Club's electronics recycling fundraiser and the collection of 9 bags of trash. Future support will include helping the Merrimack Rotary Club with the annual Turkey Trot, Giving Trees and donations to a local food pantry.

He wished everyone a very happy Thanksgiving.

2. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Yarlott was excused from the meeting.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell applauded the work of the K-6 Standards Based Report Card Committee. He reported efforts to implement the K-6 Standards Based Report Card for the 2022-2023 school year have begun.

3. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell announced that he will attend the Budget Committee meeting on November 16. He will provide the Budget Committee with a yearend review, assist with the training session and present the Capital Improvement Plan.

4. School Board Update

There were no school board updates to report.

5. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney noted high school fall sports ended. She is looking forward to an exciting winter sports season.

5. OLD BUSINESS

1. Health & Safety Task Force Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen reported the Health & Safety Task Force Committee will meet in the next several days to prepare its mask recommendation for December. Mr. Olsen expressed his concern over the increasing number of COVID cases in the schools. He is currently working with the Merrimack's Health Director Erin Olsen to establish a vaccination clinic in Merrimack for students. As of November 12, 2021 there were 51 COVID cases compared to 7 cases a month and a half ago. He reported many of the cases were at the elementary schools and that mitigation strategies are being discussed. New cases in

Merrimack per 100K over 14-day period is 665. The antigen and PCR test positivity rate is 16.4%. He will bring the December recommendation to the next School Board meeting.

Board Member Barnes clarified the next School Board meeting is December 6. She suggested the School Board schedule a special meeting for the School Board to respond to the recommendation of the Health and Safety Task Force.

After discussion, the Board agreed to hold a special school board meeting for the sole purpose of responding to the recommendation of the Health and Safety Task Force.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to give the administration latitude to institute spot mask mandates where needed due to the spread of COVID until the next school board meeting. Chair Guagliumi seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Vice Chair Rothhaus noted that is important that the parents be informed.

The motion failed 2-2-0. (Board Member Barnes and Vice Chair Rothhaus voted against the motion)

2. School Board's 2022-2023 Budget Message to Administration

School Board Priorities for the 2022-2023 Budget.

- Keep the budget as close to level funded as possible.
- Continue to Support Social and Emotional Learning for students
- Competitive pay and benefits
- Hire additional floater substitutes
- Raise graduation rates and support student success
- Offer summer programming for all grade levels
- Maintain the 1:1 student to device ratio
- Maintain the Capital Improvement Plan projects
- Continue to improve ventilation in the schools.
- Maintain COVID standards with cleaning and sanitization
- Provide as much information on budgeted line items as reasonably possible.

Vice Chair Rothhaus suggested the graduation rates include the needs of all students. She would like summer programs to be expanded to include learners needing assistance with reading, math and/or critical thinking skills. Her most important priority is the retention of high qualified teachers. She noted the importance of putting forward a warrant article(s) to reserve money for Capital Improvement Plan projects.

Board Member Hardy noted the importance of an educational screener having a component for early intervention. She wants to expand on the building level Social, Emotional and Learning opportunities sooner than later. The retention of highly qualified teachers is also important.

6. NEW BUSINESS

1. Capital Improvement Plan Review

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell presented the Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan. Projects for consideration in 2022-23 are:

- Roof repairs at TFS. (The board may want to create a warrant article for the cost of this project)
- Ventilation project at MHS is underway after delay of materials.
- O’Gara Drive paving project, inclusive of a new sidewalk.
- The Trustees of the Trust Funds paid for upgrades to the bleachers in the JMUES All Purpose Room, bleachers in the Smith Gym and installed a new floor in the JMUES All Purpose Room.
- Master Plan/SAU Office Study will resume.

It was noted future skate park plans will include collaboration with the Town of Merrimack and the Flerra family.

2. Standards-Based Report Card Presentation

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen explained the Standards-Based Report Card work began in 2017 under former Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Dr. Mark McLaughlin and continued under former Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum John Fabrizio before a delay due to COVID. Dr. Guskey’s book Developing Standards-Based Report Card by Thomas R. Guskey and Jane Bailey was used as a guide for standards-based reporting.

Michell Romein introduced Nicole Rheault, Nicole Frazzetta, Anders Benson, Debra Walter, Holly Lubelczyk and Jeanette Cote.

Assistant Principal Nicole Rheault explained the process of the evolution of reporting student progress.

Educator Anders Benson presented the standards-based report card design.

Assistant Principal Michelle Romein explained the purpose of the standards-based report card.

Educator Debra Walter spoke about the reporting timeline.

Educator Holly Lubelczyk spoke about the difference between the reporting standards and the curriculum standards.

Educator Jeanette Cote explained the process in determining reporting standards and the curriculum standards.

Educator Nicole Frazzetta described the performance indicators.

Board Member Hardy suggested rewording slide 8 from “...where additional time and effort are needed.” to read “... where additional time and support are needed.”

3. Preliminary Information on Residential Development

Interim Chief Educational Office Olsen presented the Board with preliminary information on the scope of residential development in Merrimack. This information will be important when estimating the student enrollment impact to the respective schools.

4. Memorandum of Understanding between School Board and Merrimack Teachers Association Classroom Coverage

Board Member Barnes asked the Board to consider a signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the Merrimack School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association to assist with classroom coverage. The MOU is intended to be an amendment to the current Merrimack Teachers Association contract that expires June 30, 2021. It will be incorporated in the new contract.

Board Member Barnes read the Memorandum of Agreement for inclusion in the minutes.

Memorandum of Agreement

The Merrimack School Board and the Merrimack Teachers Association (MTA) hereby agree to amend the Master Agreement by adding the following provision, effective immediately:

8.7 A middle or high school teacher (grades 7 through 12) who agrees to teach an extra academic class at the request of administration or their designee during their planning period will be paid an additional \$40 per period. No teacher will be required to accept such an assignment. No more than one additional class per day will be assigned to a teacher.

An elementary (preschool through grade 6) teacher who covers part of another class at the request of administration or their designee for more than half a day will be paid an additional \$60. If the teacher covers part of another class at the request of administration or their designee for less than half a day the teacher will be paid an additional \$40.

In all cases, the administrator, or their designee, will be responsible for assigning students.

*Approved by
The Merrimack School Board*

Chair

Date: _____

The Merrimack Teachers Association

President

Date: _____

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to authorize Chair Guagliumi to sign the Memorandum of Understanding as presented. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Other

Vice Chair Rothhaus asked the school board to consider forming a Task Force to assist with:

- Pressing educational issues such as supporting the upcoming contracts
- Recruiting the best teachers
- Work force development
- Study drop-out trends and recommend solutions
- Study how to close achievement gaps
- The Master Plan Committee could work with the Planning and Building Committee to provide feedback and be part of presentations.
- Parents review the Youth Risk Behavior Survey for trends
- Create a committee to look at the leadership profile when hiring new administrators.
- Parent recommendations to School Board

7. APPROVAL of Minutes

1. October 18, 2021 Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 18, 2021 meeting. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

2. November 1, 2021 Minutes

MOTION: Vice Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 1, 2021 meeting. Board Member Barnes seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

3. November 9, 2021 Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2021 meeting. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Educator Resignation

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell announced the resignation of Ashley Parker a 7th Grade Teacher at Merrimack Middle School.

MOTION: Board Member Barnes made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Vice Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

9. OTHER

1. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Rothhaus reported the Planning and Building Committee met. Architect Steve Keach is working on a Master Plan to present to community.

2. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

3. Comments

There were no comments to report.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, stated she appreciated the Standards Based Report Card presentation. She asked the board to not delay the emergency meeting to discuss masks.

JoAnne Principe, Beacon Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I believe it is high time that Merrimack joins Nashua and Manchester in mandating masks in classrooms. My granddaughter in first grade tested positive last week. It is now 7 days later and she is still running a fever and has been put on steroids and is still having breathing issues. She suffers from severe asthma and has been hospitalized for pneumonia 3 times in her young life. Last Monday I got her off the bus and she told me that all 3 kids at her desk cluster were not wearing masks. There was an identified positive Covid case from her classroom from the end of the week before. She goes to MES.

Also now, her sister while still testing negative has to be out of school until 11/29. During this time, while they are both on IEPs, they are not getting zoom instruction and not getting services. Manchester is currently zooming for quarantined kids. We are failing our children. With a current high of 125 reported cases in town and a state all time high positivity rate of 8.4% I implore you to make a decision to protect the children in our town.

Chuck Mower, 4 Depot Street encouraged the School Board to attend the Budget Committee meeting tomorrow evening. He hopes to receive a less cryptic budget message from the School Board. He heard financial needs to support ideas, visions and expectations of the school board. He was disappointed there was not a robust push for financing the items needed in a timely fashion. He endorsed Vice Chair Rothhaus's recommendation for a Task Force.

Jennifer Spillane, Craig Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I want to say that I am shocked about the number of COVID cases in Merrimack schools right now, but I cannot. Many of us saw this coming. The sharp, sudden rise in COVID infections in our schools shows that masks should no longer be optional.

My son attends a charter school in Nashua with well over 500 students, and they've had 2 cases of COVID since school started the final week of August, and neither of those cases of COVID were contracted at school. The school is doing so well because ALL students and staff are wearing masks. It's been scientifically proven over, and over that when everyone wears masks, they work.

My son may not attend our schools at the moment, but we've lived in Merrimack for over 20 years, and I care about the people in this community. We need to stop listening to the few who don't want their children to have to wear masks, and start listening to what science, and the experience of other schools tells us...that masks work.

Robert Reisman, 8 Iris Drive emphasized that teacher recruitment and social emotional learning are important budget items.

Christina Laliberty, 11 Parkhurst Road (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)
Unfortunately, I will not be able to make the school board meeting tonight, but I have strong feeling I wish to share.

As a mother and nurse, I am very disturbed by the current "opt-out" rule for classrooms. Masks help prevent the spread of Covid-19. Wearing a mask provides little protection to the wearer but is instead intended to stop the wearer from spreading the virus. The adage goes, "I wear my mask to protect you. You wear your mask to protect me." The families who have opted-out of mask wearing are, in my experience, the same families who do not vaccinate for Covid, and do not adhere to social distancing guidelines. These children are more likely to contract Covid in the community and pass it on in the schools.

New Hampshire is experiencing an increase in numbers. Our current daily infection rates, hospitalizations, and patients intubated rates are as high or higher than they were at the worst point in this pandemic. Our emergency rooms, ICU, and floor bed capacity has been reached. Our healthcare workers are tired and burnt out. Just recently Elliot hospital had to divert - no ambulances or admits because they were well past full. Parkland has more than a dozen patients boarding in their ED. CMC is not faring any better. This situation affects not only people needing to be seen for Covid, but traumas, illnesses, etc.

We all need to do our part. No one likes wearing a mask, but we do because it is for the greater good.

Please remove the mask opt-out option in Merrimack schools.

Katherine Nichols, 40 Burt Street (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record)

I am writing this email to voice my concern as both a parent and educator as to your mask guidelines. As of 11/10/21, 196 students/staff of the Merrimack school district had to be quarantined, as found on your website. The rate of children testing positive with COVID-19 is on the rise and vaccinations for the 5-11 year old group has just started. I am very disappointed with how this board has handled this pandemic during this school year. I feel

like you succumbed to the loudest voices against a mask mandate instead of relying on the doctors and NH Board of Education's recommendations. How can I as a parent protect my children when they are at school? I thought the board's best interest should be that of the students and their safety. Were the numbers of quarantine students lower last year when there was a mask mandate? I work in a district with a mandate and we have only had 1 positive case in the last three weeks. It definitely makes me think that the board needs some new voices that will protect the health and safety of our children.

Angelique Lippmann, 8 Owls Court (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record) During this meeting, I received an email from the RFS principal notifying me that my son was in close contact with COVID infection. I'm doing my part to keep my child in school and I'm disappointed that you are not. Please vote to remove the opt out until our cases start decreasing.

Rosemarie Rung, 21 Ministerial Drive (Board Member Barnes read aloud into the record) I share the concern about the rising cases of COVID, especially in context with much larger school districts who have a mask mandate and far fewer cases. I fully support removing the opt out as long as our numbers are trending upward. It is disappointing that the Board did not use current data to respond to this situation tonight or through an emergency meeting. By not making a decision tonight or in the next few days, more children will get sick, miss school, and spread the virus to others. I don't understand why you find this more acceptable than calling an emergency meeting. Also, I strongly support Mr. Olsen's comment about having a vaccine clinic in Merrimack to make it easier for more Merrimack parents to get their children vaccinated.

As far as the new report cards: please edit to remove jargon or words that are not in the common lexicon, for example, "automaticity."

11. ADJOURNMENT TO NON PUBLIC SESSION pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (b) (c)

Chair Guagliumi announced the Board would adjourn to non-public session to handle unfinished business from the earlier non-public session.

MOTION: At approximately 9:25 p.m., Board Member Barnes made a motion to go to into non-public session. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0 on a roll call vote.

MOTION: At approximately 10:30 p.m. Board Member Barnes made a motion to go to adjourn the public session. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.