

Public Input - Written Comments - February 17, 2022

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The meeting agenda can be found at:

<https://go.boarddocs.com/wi/aasd/Board.nsf/Public>

Email *

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First Name: *

Evelyn

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Last Name: *

Leon

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton

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Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

As a student I feel as though masks should become optional as many students already don't wear them properly. I don't think that people take into consideration that many students already don't wear them when they're not in school. I know that there was a rise in Covid cases in the beginning of the year after New Years, but if we make masks optional there is a possibility of herd immunity, if everyone gets sick then everyone would build those antibodies and not get sick again until after the 3 month period.

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Email *

First Name: *

Alexandra

Last Name: *

Madjun

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Menasha Wi, 54952

Subject: *

Mask Mandate

Public Comment for Publication *

I believe that at the next meeting taking place on February 17th, a decision of making masks optional should be made. As of right now, there are only four covid cases in the school in total, meaning that it is a safe enough environment for optional masks. Those people who want to wear masks, should have the option to wear them if they feel that it keeps them safe. But, those people who feel that masks are not keeping them safer and feel that they should not have to wear one, should have the option of not wearing one, because as seen by statistics at school, covid cases are extremely low, and masks should be optional.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Anna

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Last Name: *

Fulk

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton

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Subject: *

Allow freedom of choice

Public Comment for Publication *

Board, please stand up again for individuals' health rights. There is zero evidence that masks have any efficacy. There is yet to be a single individual I or anyone I talk to properly using a mask effectively in the school setting. Furthermore, there doesn't exist a mask for children to do this, let alone their inability to wear them properly or change them enough to have value. On the flip side, more and more evidence has come to light in the **UTTER DAMAGE** they are doing to children in their social, emotional and academic development. It's time to end these games and remember that you should not have the power to force the usage of face masks on individuals. Such things are medical devices and doing so is a **CRIME!** Stop bullying our children and your staff. Don't wait until a serious lawsuit is on your hands to do what's right. Be the leaders you ask your staff to impart on the students. Earn back the respect of your families to be that leader once again. Respect is not just given but earned. You have some work ahead. According to a Brown University study by scientist Sean Deoni, these covid rules (masks and distancing) are to be blamed for the 23% dip in children's development. Putting it back on the health department being the basis for such policies does not give it any credibility as they have **NO** proof of efficacy either.

Your discriminatory vaccine policies have no scientific basis and need to end as well. It's shameful and further damaging to students. My children and too many I know have suffered long enough. A six year old should **NEVER** be told by a teacher to double mask either! Allow us adults to access the constitutional freedoms we rightfully have been granted.

When you deprive the body of oxygen for long periods of time, there are long term effects on an individual, including reduced immune function (crucial to health during this pandemic), allows cancer to grow and thrive, increases the CO2, creates a more acidic environment, and breeds bacteria in the body. This is common training from OSHA pre-COVID. That science hasn't changed. Board, can I please hear individually from you (email) why our district is worth including our children for the next school year when their physical health #1, emotional health and academic progress is threatened and impacted so negatively?

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Email *

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First Name: *

Heather

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Last Name: *

Budler-Ronzoni

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Freedom, WI 54130

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Subject: *

Mask Policy

Public Comment for Publication *

As a student services secretary at North High School, I am all in favor of ending the mandatory masking policy. Optional masking or eliminating masking would be ideal. If numbers were to increase to a certain percentage, I could see bringing them back for a couple week to get control of the spread, but we here at North are ready to move away from masking. Thank you.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Emily

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Last Name: *

Gonnering

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54911

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Subject: *

Support for Mandatory Masking in AASD

Public Comment for Publication *

February 8, 2022

Appleton Area School District
131 E Washington Street
Appleton, WI 54911

Dear Appleton Area School District Board of Education, families, and community members,

I am a resident physician practicing at the Fox Valley Family Medicine Residency Program at Mosaic Family Health in downtown Appleton. I was born and raised in Appleton and Little Chute and have lived in the Fox Valley throughout my entire childhood and adult life. This community is and always will be my home, and it has played a large role in developing me into the young physician that I am today. It is for this reason that I am writing today to advocate for the health and safety of the community by requesting that you continue mandatory face masking in the Appleton Area School District.

As a resident physician in Appleton, I care for both children and adults in our community, some of which are students and parents in the Appleton schools. Throughout my work, I have seen the immense toll that the COVID pandemic has had not only on the physical health of the community but the mental health as well. I've held patients' hands as they called their loved ones for the last time before COVID took their lives. I've had to call patients' family members myself, telling them that their loved one would likely not survive the night. I've seen an ever-increasing amount of adults and children requiring counseling and antidepressants due to the psychological burden that this pandemic has created. Lastly, I myself was hospitalized with COVID in 2020, and while I survived, the fear and isolation that I experienced while ill has left a lasting impact.

One of the easiest ways to control the spread of COVID is by keeping our students, faculty, and staff masked. Yes, masks have been shown to be less effective against the Omicron variant. However, masks have never been foolproof, and regardless of variant, masks do minimize the amount of particles that are both exhaled and inhaled by mask wearers. Less particles aerosolized results in lessened spread of COVID-19. I, like many, am pleased that school is no longer virtual and agree that for most children, in-person school is the most effective way to learn and to build lasting relationships. However, having unmasked children results in more COVID cases, more school absences, and more disrupted classrooms. COVID numbers have finally begun to decrease in our area, and I feel that the only way we can continue this downward trend is continued masking and other social distancing guidelines until the pandemic ceases.

I strongly urge you to consider continued mandatory masks for your students and employees. The health of our community depends on it. Please share this letter at your upcoming meeting regarding masking in the Appleton Area School District. I would be happy to address questions that you may have.

Sincerely,
Emily Gonnering, MD
Mosaic Family Health
229 S Morrison Street
Appleton, WI 54911
920-832-2783
emily.gonnering@mosaicfamilyhealth.org

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Email *

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First Name: *

Amy

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Last Name: *

Kolbe

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton WI 54915

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Subject: *

Masking

Public Comment for Publication *

I FULLY expect the board to IMMEDIATELY move to optional masking. The fact our kids - with their almost ZERO chance of dying from this flu, the proof masks DO NOT work and the negative effect masking had on them - had to deal with this for almost 2 years is just sickening.

Unmask our kids NOW !!!!!!!

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Email *

First Name: *

Paula

Last Name: *

Meyer

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54913

Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

The day has come - at the time I am writing this, 18 schools are at ZERO percent - NO student covid cases, and 24 schools have ZERO teachers with covid. It is BEYOND overdue to remove the mandatory masks. Smiles are on the way - I cannot wait for the improved environment in my classroom!

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Email *

First Name: *

Greg

Last Name: *

Meyer

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54193

Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

It is time to make masks optional for students and staff in the Appleton Area School District.

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Email *

First Name: *

Kara

Last Name: *

Schroeder, RN

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

FREMONT

Subject: *

face masks

Public Comment for Publication *

I ask the leadership team and the board to please keep their word and move to optional masking. Several months ago leadership stated that once the vaccine was available for ages 5 and up, the district would allow optional masking. This promise has yet to be kept. To not acknowledge the damaging effects of constant masking would be very cavalier of the board. Students are in their 4th semester of only seeing the eyes of their teachers. This is very sad. Give the kids their childhood back! Allow them to see full facial expressions. I was speaking to a family physician just last week and she said it wasn't covid they were seeing in the clinic, but mental health that is sky rocketing. Wearing a mask and being reminded of an unseen virus that for most students only causes mild cold like symptoms is a contributing factor to anxiety and depression. Masks are very challenging to those with sensory disorders, hearing disabilities and are trying to learn English pronunciation. Then there is the fear that some kids have for being punished for not wearing them correctly. Masks interfere with interpersonal communication. Won't it be grand when we can see and give smiles again!! There isn't any data to support that communities that have had optional masking ALL year had higher levels of covid infection. A recent study from John Hopkins University indicates that non-pharmaceutical interventions like mask mandates have had "little to no effect on Covid-19 mortality".

Another point to consider is that we see masks worn incorrectly. Daily we see students and staff masks worn under the nose, hanging from ears, worn as chin straps, in pockets, pulled off and on frequently for eating, drinking, to communicate a point, and with physical exertion. It would naïve of the board and admin team to think that the improper mask wearing by many in the schools has contributed to the recent collapse of cases in the district. This the same collapse that non-masking districts have also experienced. And the masks are often so dirty! I can't help but wonder once optional masking is in place, if there will be a continued decrease in illness due to people not touching their faces so much!

Optional masking allows those that feel they need the protection of a mask to wear one.

In conclusion, I hope you will take into consideration the examples and research I provided and make the right decision.

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Email *

First Name: *

Sheri

Last Name: *

Hartzheim

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54913

Subject: *

Masking in AASD

Public Comment for Publication *

Dear Board Members... the time has come for you to stop unnecessarily wielding power over our children and your staff and lift the district's masking mandate. So much has been learned about masking, about COVID and how it has changed since the first cases here, and about the effectiveness of COVID19 vaccines since this draconian universal masking practice was enacted in this school district. The simple fact (which has been published in many major news outlets in recent weeks including the liberal Washington Post and the New York Times) is that the "my mask protects you" portion of masking protocols for COVID mitigation is no longer necessary if those who wish to attempt to protect themselves from COVID19 wear N95 (and similar) masks. So called "one-way masking" is now deemed safe and appropriate for those wishing to wear masks for the sake of COVID19 protection and, as such, universal masking is no longer necessary in public settings. EVEN THE CDC ACKNOWLEDGES THIS despite their "guidelines" and the "guidelines" of other public health agencies too slowly evolving to this point. As community case rates precipitously drop, it is time for you to move this school district to a mask-optional policy. Make it effective immediately and let us all move forward for a better learning experience for all of our children. Those in need of special protections who are not yet vaccinated can safely continue to mask with one-way masking using the most effective (and now widely available) N95-type masks and the rest of our children can move on with their learning, unencumbered by this now unnecessary universal masking burden. The time has come. Do it today.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Jennie

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Last Name: *

Barclay

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton WI 54911

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Subject: *

Optional Masking Please

Public Comment for Publication *

Please make masks OPTIONAL for students and teachers, effective immediately.

It is not our children's responsibility to mask in order to lower community case numbers or to ensure sufficient school staffing or to minimize burden on the hospital system. It never should have been their burden to bear.

Let the children see the faces and smiles of their teachers and fellow students.

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Email *

First Name: *

Darcey and Kevin

Last Name: *

Brinkhoff

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54913

Subject: *

Mask mandate

Public Comment for Publication *

Please follow the direction of the rest of the schools in this area and make the mask mandate optional. Our children have suffered for long enough.

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Email *

First Name: *

Owen Everette Karueger

Last Name: *

Karueger

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton

Subject: *

wearing a mask

Public Comment for Publication *

I believe that wearing a mask should be optional. The reason I believe this is because the cases are decreasing, but as well as the quarantine time, 5 days is crazy short, but almost everyone I know is vaccinated or has the booster and I have also found that everyone that got COVID at school, felt better after a couple days.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Jennifer

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Last Name: *

Peterson

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton

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Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

On the matter of masks, I plead with you to have masking be optional. It is past time to do so. We need to see each other's faces and smiles. I look forward to reading the facial expressions of the students in my classroom as they interact and especially as they experience those "Aha" moments.

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Email *

First Name: *

Connor

Last Name: *

Hardy

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

APPLETON

Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

As there are rumors going around of tension between people for and against masks, I would like to say that from everything I've seen at Appleton North, that is far from the truth. From my friends, to my teammates, to everyone I'm in class with, I've never, seen anyone against masks make fun of, or judge someone who is for masks. Everyone I've seen or talked to has said other people can freely make their own choice, and they'd never be judged for the decision they make. For me and so many other students, masks have made school less enjoyable, and more importantly, it's much harder to learn and be present in class. Take a class like Spanish for example, in Spanish, pronunciation is a huge component of learning the language, and it's 100 times harder to learn and understand the pronunciation when I can't even see my teachers face. It adds a barrier to my ability to learn and while masks may have positive benefits, they do just as much, or possibly even more, harm than they do good.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Jennifer

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Last Name: *

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54913

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Subject: *

End Mask Mandate

Public Comment for Publication *

I am writing with a sincere plea to please consider all kids as you vote for masking vs. no masking. We have watched numbers go up and down over the last few years and as schools not even 2 miles from some of our AASD schools are mask optional and their cases seem to mimic many of our school cases - yet we hold strong on keeping our kids masked. Why? Why are we pushing so badly to enforce this when the numbers are parity? I simply cannot force my daughter to wear a mask anymore and I shutter to understand how any of you can fathom that either. Numbers are down across the board and it's time... now. Not 4 weeks from now, not even 2 weeks from now - just now. End this - please. We are done with it and the kids are definitely done with it. Parents deserve a voice in this and deserve a choice for our own children. If you still find a reason to keep masking mandatory for any length of time beyond this it is blatantly obvious your reasoning is to push your own agenda and has nothing to do with health of our kids. You have followed "the numbers" all along - well, the numbers speak today too and we have been patient for far too long. Stop the madness. I for one (of many parents in the same boat) will no longer force my daughter to cover her face at school. If she is not allowed in school because of our person choices and health freedoms in this matter then I will take proper measures to ensure that is rectified. There are 100's if not 1000's of parents who are done. These are our kids - we want nothing but the best for them which includes safety on all levels. We will do what it takes to ensure that is your top priority as well when they are in your care. You need to look at the numbers - you need to listen to the majority of parents not just a few and you need to look at what these kids have endured this entire time. These drastic and dramatic measures need to stop.

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Email *

First Name: *

Mary

Last Name: *

Barclay

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54914

Subject: *

Masking in the schools

Public Comment for Publication *

I request that the board would make masking our students an optional choice for the parents. They are the ones who should be allowed to decide what is best for their own children. That right should not be taken away from them.

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Email *

First Name: *

Nora

Last Name: *

Murphy

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54911

Subject: *

Masks in Schools

Public Comment for Publication *

I urge the Appleton school board to continue requiring masks in schools. It is already clear from watching the wake of relaxing covid restrictions in Denmark that this virus will spread even faster and cause even more death. I want to know that all of the children I know and love in Appleton will be safe going to school.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Jonathan

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Last Name: *

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54911

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Subject: *

Please continue to require masks

Public Comment for Publication *

Dear members of the AASD board,

Please continue to require masks. We are nearing the end of the pandemic, but we're not there yet. COVID cases have come way down over the last few weeks, but they are still critically high in our region. The WI DHS has the Fox Valley region as "critically high" (burden of 1,223 cases per 100k) with hospital beds 96.2% full and ICU beds 97.7% full. Saying that cases/hospitalizations/deaths have come way down from literally off-the-charts high to still critically high so we should stop wearing masks is like someone having a BAC of 0.3 and when it falls to 0.1 saying they're safe to drive home. There are still 2400 people in the US and 37 people in Wisconsin dying every day in the US from COVID. Most of them are not children, but AASD children live with parents and grandparents. What's the psychological impact of having your parent, grandparent, or loved one die after you bring home COVID from school? The pandemic is not over. Don't remove the single most important mitigation strategy we have in place.

The CDC still recommends masking. Please do not decide you know better than the CDC. In the Jan. 10 meeting we heard some discussion of the Mayo Clinic and masks. The Mayo Clinic has not recommended against masking. As of February 3, 2022 they still recommend wearing masks (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coronavirus-mask/art-20485449>). In their facilities they are requiring better quality masks than cloth masks (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/patient-visitor-guide/preparing-for-your-visit/covid-19-acceptable-face-masks>). If you want to require surgical masks (or even better, KF94 type masks like our child and others have been wearing every day), that would certainly be better. But the fact there are better masks available than cloth masks does not mean you shouldn't wear masks at all. If all the smoke detector batteries die except for one in your house, you don't take the battery out of the one that works despite having less protection than if all are in working order.

Thank you for keeping our children as safe as possible throughout the pandemic. Don't give up now when we're so close to the end.

Sincerely,

Jonathan
Parent of an AASD 1st grader

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Email *

First Name: *

Jennifer

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Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54914

Subject: *

Board meeting

Public Comment for Publication *

As you discuss again the COVID mitigation strategies that you will use in Appleton's schools, please note something of great importance. COVID transmission has been a constant UNconstant. The rates of infection have been up and down dramatically over the past year and a half. Interestingly, the constant in our community has been masked children. Clearly, their masks have not affected the dramatic rates of COVID infection, and so now we need to look very carefully at what the masks HAVE affected. Speech and language acquisition, clarity in communication, social interactions. Have the 5th graders, who already have a hard time making new friends, suffered even more due to masks on everyone's faces? Have the kindergartners learned positive communication skills while trying to read everyone's eyes all day? Remove the mask mandate. Children and teachers need to see each other clearly, hear each other clearly, and have access to full facial expression. Stop pretending the masks work. 98% of the rest of our days are spent around people, masks optional. School, of all places, should be a place where communication and social interaction are done in the clearest and kindest possible way.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Daniel

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Last Name: *

Jacobson

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

54915

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Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

Dear Appleton School Board Members,

I am a student from Kimberly High School in which, I come to Appleton North for one class, Spanish CAPP 312. As you may know, the higher grades in the Kimberly Area School District, seventh through twelfth, have the option to wear masks. Many students at Kimberly do not wear their masks however, there are a select few who still do, and that is totally fine, it is their choice. Those who still wear a mask do not receive any form of bullying, and they are still able to protect themselves by wearing a mask. I do not believe it is okay at all to make students wear masks as we are all old enough to know what is best for ourselves and make our own decisions. Masks are just uncomfortable and a way the school can take control over its staff and its students. I love being in school, being able to see the expressions on my teachers' faces as well as the students around me. Removing the "mask mandate" from Kimberly has actually allowed more in-class work time. We do not have to take mask breaks anymore, also our teachers do not have to take the time to tell a student to put the mask over their nose. Taking CAPP Spanish is hard enough, but masks just make it so much harder. While learning a new language, it is necessary to be able to see expressions on one's face to really understand what it is they are trying to say. As I walk through the Appleton North hallways, I see many masks off or even under the nose. This shows me that most kids here at North would rather be in school without a mask on.

Just please, please give a maskless option a try in the Appleton Schools. If there is any sight of COVID-19 numbers rising quickly, then it would be wise to rethink the maskless option. It has been two weeks at Kimberly with a maskless option and everything is just fine, numbers are not rising yet where we would need to go back to masks. If you ever want to get back to "normal" you have to take baby steps. If the Kimberly Area School District can do it, I know Appleton can too!

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

54911

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Subject: *

Masking

Public Comment for Publication *

MAKE MASKS OPTIONAL TODAY...

Not tomorrow...

Not in a week...

Not March 1st...

TODAY!!!

Thank you!!!

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Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton, WI 54914

Subject: *

Masks

Public Comment for Publication *

I'd like to thank our school board for volunteering their time to serve our district. I can't imagine being in your shoes during this crazy time. You are, without question, in a very difficult position. Thank you for taking the time from your lives and for your willingness to put yourselves in what I can only assume is a very stressful position.

I am a choir teacher in the district. I would like to ask you to allow optional masking for the following three reasons. Masking makes both teaching and learning difficult in my content area, my students are struggling to get enough air to fuel their bodies while singing, and choir has not been as dangerous for covid as we initially thought.

As a teacher of singing, it is impossible for me to model appropriately for my students in a mask, allowing them to glean from me and build their technique from mine. The face is an integral part of teaching singing and being a skilled singer. From an assessment perspective, I can't accurately assess my students without seeing their faces, the shape of their mouths, the placement of their tongues, the alignment of their jaws, the tension in their lips and many other factors. Without being able to honestly and accurately assess my students, I can't give them the best feedback possible for their growth. I am certain that there are many bad singing habits happening under their masks, being daily reinforced and neurologically ingrained in their brains and bodies. Without being able to see their faces, I can teach them a generalized vocal technique, but I am not able to customize my teaching to the individual needs of their unique voices.

I've had many more light-headed kids who need to sit and catch their breath. I had one student faint and hit her head on my tile floor. Thankfully that student was not injured due to the quick hands of some nearby classmates who took hold of her to slow down her fall. I have students who regularly use their inhalers during class and students who complain of shortness of breath and headaches. I have students who slip a finger under the bottom of their masks to be able to take in more air so they can breathe and sing effectively.

At the start of Covid, singing was labeled as one of the most dangerous activities for covid spread. One year into the pandemic, singing began making a comeback. During hybrid instruction, students were provided with 3-ply surgical masks and maintained a strict 6 foot distance (as our class sizes were 1/3 of their normal size). In addition, our students wiped their seats, rehearsed with the windows open, used hand sanitizer before entering the classroom, sang over the top of a supplemental air purification system, maintained iron clad seating charts for contact tracing, and rotated between the classroom and the stage to allow clean air to cycle in an empty room before the next choir class began. Singing was still thought to be a very dangerous activity, yet we had no known covid spread in the choir room.

Presently, my largest class has 75 students. We sing shoulder to shoulder everyday because we can't possibly social distance. Masking (mostly cloth masks which have been deemed the least effective mask against Omicron by the CDC) has been our only mitigation protocol. I anticipated a huge degree of illness in my classroom with the combination of the highly contagious Omicron variant, only one mitigation strategy in place, and 75 kids singing in a closed, indoor space. It should have been the perfect storm for infection. However, what actually happened was the opposite. Even with the Omicron variant and a less restrictive environment, we still have no known cases of covid spread because of singing.

Please make masking optional so that students and families who are ready to move to the next lowest level of restriction are able to do so. I will undoubtedly love, care, and support students who choose to continue to wear a mask, but I want my students who are ready to sing unmasked to be free to learn, to maximize their potential for growth, and to be able to get enough air to fuel their bodies and brains and produce quality sound. While this is just based on my experience teaching in covid, the choir room has not turned out to be the most dangerous place in the school as originally predicted.

With deepest respect, thank you for voting to support optional masking.

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Email *

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First Name: *

Kari

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Last Name: *

Lhost

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Address: *

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City, State, Zip: *

Appleton WI 54911

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Subject: *

Masking

Public Comment for Publication *

Dear school board and Dr Baseman,

I am asking you to please vote to keep universal masking until our community's numbers are at the "low" or at the very least "moderate" level. This answers Amanda Stuck's request of hard numbers for a move to masks optional. We need to wait until cases are actually low rather than anticipating that they will be low at some future date.

The CDC continues to endorse universal masking in schools and advises state and local officials to enact indoor masking policies in all areas of the country where transmission is high. Outagamie county falls into the "critically high" category.

I'd also like to advocate for the children who will be bullied and tormented because they continue to wear masks to protect themselves and loved ones (which won't be nearly as effective if others around them for hours at a time aren't also masked). We already know this will happen as evidence by the words and actions of anti masking parents and the bullying by children in other districts. The bullying and social pressure will affect children's mental health. There are psychological benefits to requiring masks for all.

I am asking you to please use critical thinking tomorrow when you vote on masking in our public schools---vote to keep masks.

Kari

Parent of a 1 st grader and a newborn

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Email *

First Name: *

Andrea

Last Name: *

Klitzke

Address: *

City, State, Zip: *

Appleton

Subject: *

Moving Foward

Public Comment for Publication *

So here we are- another year nearly gone. While some might cheer in excitement about moving towards a mask optional environment for our kids, the rest of us are speechless and numb at this point. So many opposing to our view say... "why so much distrust?" and they truthfully don't understand what our kids have been through and the weight that remains on our shoulders... that we kept doing the same thing over and over again even though it didn't work, to make other people comfortable. We're supposed to protect our children, not expect them to protect us. We made them live in perpetual fear of each other and told them they didn't care about people unless they covered their faces. We programmed them to believe that they're a harm to society.

Have you seen our community? We have an entire community strung to a belief that our kids have been "resilient" this whole time. When have we ever expected them to tolerate unnecessary trauma prior to the year 2019? Now I hear people in the MLK jr video done by the district stating that our kids HAVE been struggling this year. I have emails between administration and medical advisors admitting that most people wouldn't send their kids in masks if given the choice- amongst many other troubling things I've already sent to the board, but the one that broke me to tears was "and kids are resilient is the message, right?" We had to convince people that their kids were okay, knowing full well that they weren't. Look at our local mental health facilities like Catalpa. Our district hasn't even been measuring how many students are requiring help from guidance counselors or referred out to other services- I know because I asked. We've certainly seen them struggle academically and more emerging studies are surfacing that they haven't been okay. So many of us already knew this because we've been living it EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. Regardless of your beliefs- what has the district done to serve our families? Nothing.

Virtual learning wasn't working for our kids? Keep doing it. Someday you'll go back.

Some students are struggling with masks and families are upset? Let them keep fighting and offer no solutions. Matter of fact, if they don't want to subject their kids to stressful circumstances, they can do virtual schooling "if they don't comply", even though they're not the ones afraid, and virtual schooling failed them to begin with.

We lost our kids through a battle with each other while they hung in limbo, never knowing what tomorrow would bring. I know our kids aren't okay because we aren't okay. We've become so divided because the more we fought, we doubled down. On one hand- a population that could SEE what we were doing wasn't working, would tell us to stop whining and that our kids could "handle it", all while being in other private groups behind the scenes talking about how their children weren't handling it... and doubling down on the outside because it was too painful to admit they were destroying our children over something that barely affected them, or most people. Even the slightest, ever so slightest benefit one could argue was not worth all the damage done to them.

So now I ask:

- What will you do in the future to ensure these past two years never happen again?
- Who is going to take accountability for this? The fact that we've done more harm than good and no one bothered to try to help people with solutions that met the needs of every child, every day?
- Where is the data that forced masking helped prevent in school spread?
- How are you going to fix the decline in achievement and increased need for mental health services?
- How are you going to help our kids transition back to normalcy so they aren't attacking each other over personal choices (both sides of this) when we let our city go to war with each other and did nothing to close the divide?

On November 22nd, you voted to implement a 2% positivity rate standard for each school to determine masking mandates. On January 10th, you voted it down saying it was no longer feasible, even though Ed Ruffolo was trying to introduce an opportunity for an amendment to lay out the groundwork for "If there's anything that will reverse this, it'll be xyz". At that point, only 3 schools would have been allowed to be mask optional, but it was more or less setting the standard for which you'd be willing to allow mask optional.

* So what's the new standard now?

*What changed from Jim's "Five positivity points" he stated in his yes vote on 11/22 (I'll help you...nothing of those points changed).

*Why did it take until November to even set guidelines to begin with? Why weren't there guidelines all along? If that was the guideline (2%), our kids should have been optional all year.

I also want to thank: Deb, Ed, James, and Amanda. I may not always agree with you all, but the board has operated much better than it had, when you came in. You take the time to answer families and have real conversations. I appreciate the time that you've invested to listening and the thought you have put into your vote. I am appreciative of your willingness to listen and believe that some of you are working towards setting a more structured framework. I realize it's hard to do when people aren't willing to have that conversation to

work towards consistency- we need new leadership to help guide this and support your efforts. Thank you for all you do and the work you put in.

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