

August 18, 2021 Board Meeting

1 message

Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Sun, Aug 22, 2021 at 4:26 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Dear Katie,

Thank you for your recent letter to the Board of Education. As you mentioned, we try to put the best interest of our children and our community at the heart of every decision. As we go through the year, we will continue to monitor the guidance of CCDPH, IDPH and ISBE as we make changes to our mitigation strategies. Thank you for sharing all of this information and for partnering with us.

Best wishes to your family for this new school year!

Amy Poehling

August 18, 2021 Board Meeting

Katarzyna Lapinski <[REDACTED]>
To: board@wilmette39.org

Wed, Aug 18, 2021 at 5:55 PM

Dear Board

My name is Katarzyna (Katie) Lapinski currently living at [REDACTED] in Wilmette IL. I am a proud mom of two students [REDACTED] both attending Romona Elementary School.

First I'd like to congratulate you on your very successful and details back to school plan. I strongly appreciate that School District 39 was one of the few opened during last school year. It is very apparent that the interest of our children has always been the top priority of our School Board in District 39.

While listening our board meeting which took place today (August 18, 2021) I'd like to make the following comments as it relates to Covid-19 safety regiment:

1. Mask Mandate – I fully understand that the State of Illinois has implemented a universal mask mandates for all school. Nonetheless, when rules are relax, I'd like to challenge the School Board to reconsider the mask mandate due to overwhelming evidence of very limited efficacy of cloth masks. Regular mask are marginally beneficial in protecting individuals from particles of SARS Cov-2 Covid 19 particles (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27531371/>). However, now we understand the negative health and psychological implications of mask wearing especially on the youngest of our children. Below is the list of most harmful side effect of constant mask wearing:

Ø Health Implications:

§ [Masks adversely affect respiratory physiology and function](#)

§ [Masks lower oxygen levels in the blood](#) making children more prone to contract Covid 19 due to SARS Cov-2 becoming more dangerous when blood oxygen levels decline

§ [Masks trap exhaled viral \(and other\) pathogens in the mouth/mask interspace, increase viral/infectious load, and increase the severity of disease](#)

§ Mask worn imperfectly are dangerous as they collect and colonize viruses, bacteria, fungi and mold

Ø Psychological Negative Implications:

§ Cognitive development issues -This is even more critical in relation to children with special needs or those within the autism spectrum who need to be able to recognize [facial expressions](#) as part of their ongoing development

§ Anxiety

2. Covid 19 vaccination –covid 19 vaccination in not yet FDA approved vaccination with medical trials underway. As per the CDC website “Clinical trials are medical research studies to test new ways to prevent, detect, or treat diseases”. Until trials are completed, the efficacy of covid-19 vaccination as well as potential side effects cannot be concluded. Recently CDC advised of the following and significant side effects in male adolescents and young adults age 16 years or older

§ Myocarditis and Pericarditis -Since April 2021, there have been more than a thousand reports to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) of cases of inflammation of the heart—called myocarditis and pericarditis—happening after mRNA COVID-19 vaccination.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/myocarditis.html>)

§ As of August 10, VAERS reported the following number as it relates to mRNA covid 19 vaccination side effect: over 41K hospitalized, over 13K permanently disabled, over 12,000 people died as a result of the covid 19 experimental shot. I’d like to point out that the number of deaths as a result of covid 19 experimental shot exceeds the total 30 year death tally for all FDA approved vaccinations.

§ European Union is currently looking into the following and additional side effect of the mRNA experimental shot - erythema multiforme, a form of allergic skin reaction; glomerulonephritis or kidney inflammation; and nephrotic syndrome, a renal disorder characterized by heavy urinary protein losses.

§ Extreme fatigue , complete loss of appetite, nausea, sweats

With Covid -19 survival rate of 99.7% in young and healthy adults and the alarming side effects of the mRNA experimental shot, subjecting children to medical trials seems to be hasty, impulsive and dangerous. I’d like to point out that the list of side effects may increase as we progress in these clinical trials. Mid term side effect will be know to us 3 years in 2023.

Having in mind the best interest of our children, I trust the Board will continue to monitor not only current safety guidelines but also VAERS databases before recommending and promoting participation in wide spread clinical trials on our children. I also trust that any recommendation will be made with parents collaboration and approval.

In conclusion I’d like to Thank You for your commitment to our school and children. I look forward to another successful school year.

Best Regards,

Katie

Re: In support of mitigation plans

1 message

Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Wed, Aug 18, 2021 at 11:49 AM

To: Alexis Hubbard <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Dear Alexis,

Thank you so much for your message of support. That means so much to us. We agree that these measures will help us open schools safely! I love hearing about your children's experience at summer enrichment.

Best wishes for a wonderful school year!

Amy Poehling

> On Aug 18, 2021, at 11:19 AM, Alexis Hubbard <[REDACTED]> wrote:

>

> Hi Board and Superintendent,

> I just wanted to send a brief message in support of the proposed mitigation plan you will be finalizing at the meeting today. Universal masking, distancing, and keeping the kids with their class cohort are all reasonable measures to ensure as much in-person instruction as possible in the face of the delta variant.

>

> Our kids will be in first and fourth grades at McKenzie. We chose remote last year and had the kids do the summer enrichment program to reacclimate to being in person. They would literally sprint to the front door at drop off and already want to do the program next year.

>

> Thank you for all of the careful consideration about how to keep the kids (and staff and everyone's families) as safe as possible while also continuing in-person instruction. We're looking forward to another great school year in District 39!

>

> Alexis Hubbard

Re: Why isn't our district requiring masks for everyone?

1 message

Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Sun, Aug 15, 2021 at 7:50 AM

To: Ben Tolsky <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Good morning, Ben. We will be discussing mitigation strategies at our Committee of the Whole meeting this Wednesday at 8 am. Details about this meeting can be found on our website. I have put the link to the meeting below. How we approach lunch at the various schools will be discussed in this meeting. Thank you for your thoughtful advocacy and suggestions. We share your determination to keep our students safe. It is our highest priority.

Amy Poehling

https://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_360846/File/Board%20of%20Ed/Meeting%20Information/2021-08-18%20CoW%20Agenda.pdf

On Aug 15, 2021, at 12:02 AM, Ben Tolsky <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Of course I'm still awaiting the information on how you plan to keep kids safe at school this year now that they are threatened by a much more dangerous delta variant. I was wondering what thought is being given towards lunch, and if the district would consider allowing parents to pick up their kids and have them eat lunch at home before returning to school. It seems like this would eliminate the most dangerous part of the day for families that are wanting to do this, and would free up additional space for social distancing for kids who remain at school.

The fact is, me and my wife are fully vaccinated, and neither of us have eaten inside a restaurant since the initial lockdown. We do want to send our kids back to school in a few weeks, but it seems absurd that we would be allowing our kids to eat in a communal setting while we are unwilling to do so ourselves.

Of course another option that should perhaps be on the table is delaying the start of the school year and allowing school to go into the summer given the current rates of infection and the fact that vaccines for children are on the horizon. Even waiting for kids to get just one shot before school starts could make a huge difference.

Thanks

Ben Tolsky

On Thu, Jul 29, 2021 at 9:29 AM Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Dear Ben,

Thank you for taking the time to write to the board. We appreciate your partnership and your advocacy. At this point, no decisions have been made about masks for the fall. We are continuing to digest and monitor the guidance and will discuss this, along with other mitigation strategies, at our upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting on August 18. The recommendations continue to change and so we are waiting until then to make any decisions. We are so looking forward to having all of our students back in the fall and will weigh all of these decisions with great care and research.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 28, 2021, at 6:29 PM, Ben Tolsky <[REDACTED]> wrote:

I just read the email that was sent out by the superintendent and am very disturbed by it. The CDC has clearly stated that everyone in a K-12 building should be wearing a mask regardless of vaccination status. They even said that vaccinated people should be wearing masks indoors if they are in a county with a high level of transmission (which I believe Cook county is on the cusp of reaching). The IDPH and CCDPH have both updated their guidance to comply with the CDC guidelines. Please see this article: <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/cook-county-adjusts-masking-guidance-for-schools-in-wake-of-new-cdc-recommendation/2569322/>

The fact is, our children are not choosing to not get vaccinated. Like every other student at our elementary schools, they are not allowed to get vaccinated. There is no reason why in our schools we should not require everyone to wear a mask at all times regardless of vaccination status.

Furthermore, many governments are requiring all employees to either be vaccinated or to get tested regularly. While I doubt this would be an issue with our teachers or staff, I see no reason why our district shouldn't have a similar policy in place.

Our goal should be to protect our children and keep them safe from a deadly disease. I do not think that our district should be taking any shortcuts with our children's health. There is zero benefit to allowing anyone to go massless in our schools. Please do the right thing and keep our children safe. Hopefully vaccines will be available to children this fall or winter and things will be able to return to normal after that.

Ben Tolsky

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Questions for Board Meeting

1 message

Lucie Xu <[REDACTED]>
To: board@wilmette39.org

Sun, Aug 15, 2021 at 1:14 AM

Dear Board Members,

I am a parent with children attending Central Elementary School. I have the following questions that I hope the board can discuss and address during the meeting on 8/18.

1. In light of the surge of cases caused by the Delta variant of COVID19, especially with rapid increase in pediatric cases, is it possible for District39 to offer a remote learning option for the fall?

I understand and am thankful that our district's COVID mitigation has been among the best in the nation all throughout the pandemic. However, I'm concerned that a lot of our spring mitigations that were adequate in preventing the alpha variant are no longer up to date in the battle with the Delta variant. Cases in Wilmette have also been steadily increasing for the last 3 weeks, making us a 'high transmission' area. Among many news articles, I'm attaching [this one](#) that mentioned a recent peer-reviewed [report](#) by Dr. Julie Swann and team where they simulated possible COVID infection scenarios in schools this fall. Their model predicted that even WITH masks and frequent testing, 35-40% of elementary school students would be infected within 3 months. That is a very troubling prediction and should warrant the district to reconsider the plan to be fully in person this fall.

I wholeheartedly believe that children need to be in school and no form of remote learning can fully replace in person learning at school. However, I also highly value the consistency and safety in a child's learning environment as well. I ask the board to be proactive and consider offering a hybrid or fully remote model like last year. One possibility is to send a district or school-wide survey to all parents. If there's enough interest in a remote option, then these risk-averse families should at least deserve to have this option available to them. We have to consider situations like a child who lives with other immunocompromised or high risk family members etc. Besides, this would significantly decrease community transmission. It is challenging and less ideal than the 'normal' school year that we had hoped for earlier this summer, but we have to do what is necessary even when it's hard, and last year has proven that it was doable. A remote option would also provide the schools much better consistency, compared to the potential scenarios of having to shut down and quarantine every few weeks, as it is already the case in many other states where school started just a couple weeks ago. We don't have to go through what they have gone through before we decide to change. We can learn from their experience and choose to be proactive instead.

2. If a remote option is absolutely not available, then what will be the updated and strict mitigations for the fall? How will off-mask times be minimized? How will lunches and snacks be handled safely? Can you require masks during outdoor recess time as well? How will cases and exposures be reported and quarantined?

Thank you for your patience and consideration. I'd appreciate it very much if you could address these questions and concerns during the board meeting this week.

Thank you,
Lucie

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Re: Change of Meeting Time

1 message

Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Fri, Aug 13, 2021 at 8:05 PM

To: Tracey Brownrigg <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Dear Tracey,

Thank you for your email! There have not been any last minute changes of the August 18, 2021 meeting. Next week's meeting has been scheduled for August 18, 2021 at 8:00 am since the Board's discussion of this meeting at its last Committee of the Whole Meeting on June 7, 2021 and finalization of the date and time for this meeting at the Board's Regular Board Meeting on June 14, 2021. Dr. Cremascoli has referenced this meeting in her bi-monthly communications throughout the summer. The Act does not require an evening meeting, and the Board of Education regularly holds its Committee of the Whole and/or Special Meetings at 8:00 am. This meeting will be held in-person and also live-streamed for those who wish to attend the meeting remotely.

My best,

Amy Poehling

On Aug 13, 2021, at 4:58 PM, Tracey Brownrigg <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hello,

As a District 39 parent it has come to my attention that the last minute change of the School Board meeting does not meet the Open Meeting Act. Under this law and I quote"

(5 ILCS 120/2.01) (from Ch. 102, par. 42.01)

Sec. 2.01. All meetings required by this Act to be public shall be held at specified times and places which are convenient and open to the public. No meeting required by this Act to be public shall be held on a legal holiday unless the regular meeting day falls on that holiday.

Beside the fact that scheduling this meeting when most people are at work shows a complete lack of leadership it also does not meet the standards of the law in Illinois.

Due to this, I will expect that this meeting will be changed to the evening as soon as possible to include the participation of the parents whose children are greatly affected by the actions of this board.

Sincerely,
Tracey Brownrigg

August Board Meeting

1 message

Tracey Brownrigg <[REDACTED]>
To: board@wilmette39.org

Fri, Aug 13, 2021 at 2:52 PM

I am writing to say how incredibly disappointed I am that you have rescheduled the August board meeting for Wednesday at 8am. There is no other answer to this but you want to exclude parents and their right to speak up and share their ideas. I have planned to come share my ideas and concerns but as many parents I will be at work at this time. I moved to Wilmette to go to District 39. As last year progressed I became more and more disappointed in this district. This meeting proves my theory that what the community wants to share is not considered at all.

I am truly disappointed.
Tracey Brownrigg

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

From: Rebecca Littmann <littmanr@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Fwd: Please Make Masks Optional for the 2021-2022 School Year
Date: August 10, 2021 at 4:40:26 PM CDT
To: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Begin forwarded message:

From: Emily Larmee [REDACTED] >
Subject: Please Make Masks Optional for the 2021-2022 School Year
Date: August 10, 2021 at 4:16:20 PM CDT
To: Rebecca Littmann <littmanr@wilmette39.org>, harperh@wilmette39.org
Cc: Wilmette Public Schools District 39 <communications@wilmette39.org>

Good afternoon,

I hope you are having a great summer! I wanted to share some information in hopes that there is still consideration to have **masks be optional** at Central Elementary School this school year. I know we all want what is best for our children and the science just really does not support masks for children 12 and under. Would there be a way to get this information to our D39 school board as well?

Dr Dan Stock made a notable presentation to a school board in IN just yesterday.

You can watch his 6 minute presentation before the school board [HERE](#) on Facebook or [HERE](#) on youtube (15:20 mark) [HERE](#) on Rumble.

Click on the links to access the following studies.

[1. SARS-CoV2-Transmission Among Marine Recruits during Quarantine.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

[2. Longitudinal analysis shows durable and broad immune memory after SARS-CoV-2 infection with persisting antibody responses and memory B and T cells.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

[3. Vitamin D for prevention of respiratory tract infections: A systematic review and meta-analysis.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

[4. Facemasks in the COVID-19 era: A health hypothesis](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

5. [CDC assessment of non-pharmaceutical influenza methods.](#)

6. [Federalist cases/mortality mask comparison](#)

7. [Heritage Foundation Study](#) – In fact, mask use during the pandemic has been recommended by The Heritage Foundation’s Coronavirus Commission guidelines. However, our findings do suggest that public health strategies relying predominantly on mask mandates are inadequate, and thus other initiatives, in addition to mask wearing, should have been a component of policies aimed to limit the spread of the disease.

8. [Declaration of Great Barrington](#)– The Great Barrington Declaration- As infectious disease epidemiologists and public health scientists we have grave concerns about the damaging physical and mental health impacts of the prevailing COVID-19 policies, and recommend an approach we call Focused Protection. [Over 60,000 medical experts have signed this declaration.](#)

9. [Covid-19 Breakthrough Infections in Vaccinated Health Care Workers.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

10. [Calcifediol Treatment and Hospital Mortality Due to COVID-19: A Cohort Study](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

11. [Experimental Assessment of Carbon Dioxide Content in Inhaled Air With or Without Face Masks in Healthy Children.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

12. [Calcifediol treatment and COVID-19-related outcomes](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

13. [“Effect of calcifediol treatment and best available therapy versus best available therapy on intensive care unit admission and mortality among patients hospitalized for COVID-19: A pilot randomized clinical study.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

14. [Effectiveness of Adding a Mask Recommendation to Other Public Health Measures to Prevent SARS-CoV-2 Infection in Danish Mask Wearers](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

15. [Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

16. [Face-Masks in the COVID-19 era: A health hypothesis](#)

17. [Infection Fatality Ratios for COVID-19 Among Non-Institutionalized Persons 12 and Older: Results of a Random-Sample Prevalence Study](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

18. [Open Schools, COVID-19, and Child and Teacher Morbidity in Sweden.](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

19. [Face-Masks to prevent transmission of influenza virus: a systematic review](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

20. [Outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 Infections, Including COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Infections, Associated with Large Public Gathering- Barnstable County, Massachusetts, July 2021](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

21. [Short term, high-dose vitamin D supplementation for COVID-19 disease: a randomized, placebo-controlled, study](#)

READ THE PDF STUDY [HERE](#).

22. [Rapid Expert Consultation on the Effectiveness of Fabric Masks for the COVID-19 Pandemic \(April 8, 2020\)](#)

Thank you in advance for your time,

Emily Larmee

Re: D39 Masking

Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>
To: Cheryl Axelrod <[REDACTED]>

Wed, Aug 4, 2021 at 8:46 AM

Dear Doctor Axelrod and additional signing Doctors,

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your perspective and your expertise. I sincerely appreciate your collective communication and advocacy on this matter. Thank you for taking the time to write to us.

Our administrative team will be thoughtfully reviewing and considering your insights along with the guidance of our public health officials as we seek to make this really important recommendation to our Board of Education at their upcoming meeting on August 18th wherein mitigation measures will be reviewed and the Board will make the final determination. Focusing on keeping our students and staff safe while also providing ongoing in-person instruction is unquestionably a top priority of ours. As I shared in my recent communication to families, we are taking the time to make sure we fully understand the recent changes in guidance and how it affects our school protocol and operations. Aligning with and implementing the public health recommendations of the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH served us well as we safely operated in-person schooling last school year and continuing to do so will certainly benefit us as we reopen schools this fall. We expect additional clarification and direction to inform this decision, and the Board will make the final determination for protocol for the start of school on August 18th. Just as with all decisions we made throughout the school year last year, this decision will be made with the guidance of our local health department.

Thank you again for taking the time to advocate for healthy and safe in-person instruction and to share your perspective. I hope you and your families continue to enjoy summer.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Aug 4, 2021, at 8:13 AM, Cheryl Axelrod <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dr Cremascoli,

The recent release of The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC)'s [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) has led to much discussion among parents, teachers and administrators about the upcoming school year. We applaud the CDC and IDPH's emphasis on getting children and adolescents back to in-person learning. However, we are concerned that the responsibility for interpreting and implementing this guidance now rests with local school districts, who may lack the resources to develop and enforce mitigation efforts for the children they serve.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has stated that [in-person learning is superior for the academic and social development](#) of children, **yet the benefits of in-person learning are only as good as our ability to keep schools open.**

Over the past school year, millions of children have returned to in-person learning protected from COVID-19 spread by the safe, successful wearing of masks. As the prevalence of the Delta variant and other [highly transmissible variants](#) rises throughout our communities, masks remain integral to the layered approach to COVID-19 prevention. Leaving mask guidance up to individual groups is ill-advised, as [cases rise in Illinois](#) and in light of recent outbreaks among children in [summer camps](#) where masks and vaccinations were not required.

In the absence of concrete guidance, we are already hearing of local school districts, like ours in Wilmette, being pressured to prematurely abandon mitigation strategies, like universal masking, thus placing children, families, and communities at risk. Safe school policies must incorporate crucial metrics such as local vaccine rates and rises in case counts, hospitalizations, and contagious variants. We need uniform guidance from state public health entities which includes this information **before** schools consider relaxing protective measures for the start of school this fall. In the absence of state regulations, we implore District 39 to continue previous distancing and masking guidelines. The AAP has recently come [out supporting masking](#) in schools.

As healthcare workers, parents and Wilmette residents, we appreciate the complex and ever-changing nature of these decisions. Layered mitigation strategies [have been shown to keep school transmission rates low](#) especially in classroom settings that include unvaccinated children. Children under 12 are still ineligible for vaccination, and [only a third of eligible adolescents in Illinois are fully vaccinated](#), which means the vast majority of Illinois children are left vulnerable to COVID-19 as they begin the school year. We will indeed remind you that last school year brought the death of a Central student from an underlying condition while she and her family were infected with COVID. While many children fare well with infection, some do not, and it is our duty to protect the most vulnerable. Additionally, children can easily be vectors and bring home the virus to vulnerable immunosuppressed family members.

We will be unable to avoid school outbreaks and closures unless we continue the layered approach we have relied on thus far to prevent transmission in schools. **Until a school meets a high threshold of vaccination for both students and staff, we strongly recommend that the State of Illinois and in the absence of that, District 39 of Wilmette, continue to require universal masking in schools this fall.**

Cheryl Axelrod, MD
OB/GYN

Leslie Wallene Yang, MD
Gastroenterology

Ann Borders, MD
Maternal Fetal Medicine

Rucha Patel, DPT
Physical Therapy

Jill Anderson, MD
Dermatology

Raina Paul MD.
Pediatric emergency medicine physician
Executive member for the Council on Quality Improvement and Patient Safety for the
AAP; Director of quality and patient safety, Emergency department system, Advocate
Children's

George Verghese MD MBA
Pediatrics
Director of Quality, Ann and Robert H Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

Jacqueline Welter, MD
Pediatric Hospitalist/Urgent Care

Amy Henriott, MD
OB/GYN

Susan Alt, MD
Internal Medicine

Bruni Hirsch, APRN, CNM
Midwife

Alma Arslanagic, MD
Hospitalist/ Internal Medicine

Sara Berg, MD
Internal Medicine

Erica Lockwood, RN
Megan R. Leahy, DPM
Podiatric Surgeon

Lisa Oldson MD
Internal Medicine & Obesity Medicine

Laura Hemmer, MD
Neuroanesthesiology

Sarah Noda, MEd LLPC

Kavita Gupta Alford, MD
Pediatrics

Louis Alford, MD
Anesthesia

Michael Weinrich, MD PhD
Allergy/Immunology

Heather Weinreich MD MPH
Otolaryngology, Otology, Neurotology and Skull Base Surgery

Elizabeth Hart, MPT
Physical Therapy

Michael Shane, MD
Anesthesia

Gretchen Smith, MD
Radiology

Shohreh Raeisi, Masters in Molecular Biology
Gastroenterology Department, Rush

Anita Kandiar, MD
Pediatrics

JW Beard, MD
Anesthesia

Kelly Schmidt, PhD
Psychology

Jennifer Wicks, MD
Neonatologist

D.H. Rogers, MD
Internal Medicine

Mark Sisco, MD
Plastic Surgery

Amanda Myers, MD
Rheumatology

Katherine Sisco, MD
Ob/Gyn

JH Swary, MD
Dermatology

Michael Musacchio, MD
Neurosurgery

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Re: 2021-2022 School Year Planning

Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Wed, Aug 4, 2021 at 8:37 AM

To: Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Micah Hemmer <[REDACTED]>

Dear Laura,

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective and expertise. I know that our Board of Education will be thoughtfully reviewing and considering your insights along with the guidance of our public health officials as they seek to make this really important decision. Focusing on keeping our students and staff safe while also providing ongoing in-person instruction is unquestionably a top priority of ours. As I shared, we are taking the time to make sure we fully understand the recent changes in guidance and how it affects our school protocol. Aligning with and implementing the public health recommendations of the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH served us well as we safely operated in-person schooling last school year and continuing to do so will certainly benefit us as we reopen schools this fall. We expect additional clarification and direction to inform this decision, and the Board will make the final determination for protocol for the start of school on August 18th. Just as with all decisions we made throughout the school year last year, this decision will be made with the guidance of our local health department.

Thank you again for taking the time to advocate for healthy and safe in-person instruction and to share your perspective. I hope you and your family continue to enjoy summer.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Aug 3, 2021, at 11:33 PM, Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Ms. Poehling, Dr. Cremascoli and All School Board Members:

I appreciate Mrs. Poehling's response so that I know my July 15th communication was received, and I continue to appreciate and sympathize with the extraordinary effort required for school year planning in the face of changing guidance and last-minute guidance from regulatory bodies. As you surely know, since my July 15th letter urging masking indoors for all in our schools, the American Academy of Pediatrics, CDC, IDPH, ISBE, and CCDPH have all recommended masking in school indoors for everyone. The CCDPH in their 7/23/2021 guidance to Suburban Cook County schools clearly also states, "The expectation is that schools will follow the CDC masking guidance...The use of "should" in the guidance does not imply that a strategy is optional." (<https://cookcountypublichealth.org/2021/07/23/cook-county-department-of-public-health-guidance-for-suburban-cook-county-school-districts/>) Not following this recommendation with evolving COVID variants and sky-rocketing transmission rates would be **unconscionable**.

Furthermore, D39's stated indecision regarding requiring masking for all (when the decision should have been clear by the time of my July 15th email from the WHO recommendations) is alarming and it only detracts from time available to spend on other critical issues requiring more nuance (e.g. safety precautions during lunch, testing regimen, quarantine strategies, etc.) In addition, although D39 has stated recently in Dr. Cremascoli's communication to families on July 28th that no decision has been made regarding masking, it has somehow already committed to cohorting our

elementary students and thus limiting the full extent of their education once again, as described in my July 15th communication to you. At least, please DO NOT also limit students' enjoyment and social development at recess by cohorting outside. Canada's SickKids, who you likely recall from my communications to you last year as an advisory group led by Canada's top academic children's hospital, The Hospital for Sick Children, has recently updated their guidance in conjunction with other multidisciplinary experts for schools for Fall 2021. They note that, as clear from the 2020-21 school year, "cohorts were not optimal for learning, development, or social interactions." They specifically note at the elementary level that "Classroom cohort mixing should be permitted outdoors (e.g., recess)."(<https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/sciencebrief/school-operation-for-the-2021-2022-academic-year-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/>) Fortunately, the ISBE's updated guidance from yesterday now better supports full outdoor recess also by stating, "In general, individuals who are solely exposed to a confirmed case while outdoors should not be considered close contacts."(<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-School-FAQs-20210802.pdf>)

Thank you, once again, for your focus and diligence in resuming essential safe in-person education for our D39 children.

Sincerely,

Laura Hemmer, M.D., FASA

(children entering 3rd and 6th grades)

From: Stephanie Daneve <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: 8/2 Public comment

Date: August 3, 2021 at 8:12:34 AM CDT

To: hartan@wilmette39.org, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, stonee@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, poehlinga@wilmette39.org, fabesl@wilmette39.org, kimb@wilmette39.org

I joined the meeting before 8am this morning before live stream started. A board member stated that someone had joined the meeting (me) so they reminded everyone should put on a mask because they can be seen. Masks were not all being worned by all board members, it is very hypocritical to ask students/staff/community to wear masks while admin is not following their own rules.

Thanks,
Stephanie

On Tue, Aug 3, 2021 at 8:02 AM Stephanie Daneve <[REDACTED]> wrote:
Dear District 39,

For reading at 8/2 Public comment,

This upcoming school year at D39 has the opportunity to be mask optional and return focus to the social/emotion development of students. CDC and IPDH have changed all their language to only recommend masks/contact tracing/discrimination based on Vax status. Many school districts in Illinois have had a normal school year last year and more school districts will have a normal school year next month. By normal I mean if you feel sick stay home, if one shows symptoms of being sick, stay home for 24hours then return to school. Also masks optional and a Non FDA approved Emergency Use Vax should not define someone's learning. This normalcy will allow all learners to have their freedom and focus on important social and emotional learning. Kids are smart and aware of the mitigation discrepancies between their learning at District 39 ,other Illinois school districts, or other districts out of state.

99.9% of Kids have no risk of severe outcomes from Sars-Cov-19. Neighboring school districts will be having a normal school district and Wilmette should stop pretending to be in an alternative unsafe reality for next school year. Covid will never go away; the current summer surge of positive cases, just like last year, will pass in several weeks regardless of mitigations in place for the upcoming school year.

Lastly this meeting is a violation of the open meeting act. From your agenda, "In person attendance for this meeting will be limited to not more than 10 people from the general public in order to adhere to the maximum group size capacity" "Register in advance to participate remotely" Across the street from this building, the Wilmette Junior High School Auditorium, cafeteria, and gym all have space that would exceed any capacity constraints. Please add language to meeting policy and future agendas that meeting will have space for all of attendees when more than 10 people.

Thanks for reading
Wilmette Resident

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

August 18, 2021 Board Meeting

1 message

Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Sun, Aug 22, 2021 at 4:26 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Dear Katie,

Thank you for your recent letter to the Board of Education. As you mentioned, we try to put the best interest of our children and our community at the heart of every decision. As we go through the year, we will continue to monitor the guidance of CCDPH, IDPH and ISBE as we make changes to our mitigation strategies. Thank you for sharing all of this information and for partnering with us.

Best wishes to your family for this new school year!

Amy Poehling

mask mandates

1 message

Tracey Brownrigg <[REDACTED]>
To: board@wilmette39.org

Sun, Aug 1, 2021 at 8:19 AM

As mask mandates sweep through Wilmette I am having trouble finding the data that shows a big jump in Covid cases and repeatedly find that deaths and hospitalizations are minimal for all people but almost non-existent for children. Can you please share what data/metrics and information you will be using in deciding the policies of your district as schools open.

Sincerely,
Tracey Brownrigg

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Re: Universal Indoor Masking Policy for D39 Fall 2021-22 School Year

1 message

Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Fri, Jul 30, 2021 at 4:32 PM

To: Bridget Larson <[REDACTED]>, Andy Hoel <[REDACTED]>

Dear Bridget and Andrew,

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective and expertise. I know that our Board of Education will be thoughtfully reviewing and considering your insights along with the guidance of our public health officials as they seek to make this really important decision. Focusing on keeping our students and staff safe while also providing ongoing in-person instruction is unquestionably a top priority of ours. As I shared, we are taking the time to make sure we fully understand the recent changes in guidance and how it affects our school protocol. Aligning with and implementing the public health recommendations of the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH served us well as we safely operated in-person schooling last school year and continuing to do so will certainly benefit us as we reopen schools this fall. We expect additional clarification and direction to help guide this decision, and the Board will make the final determination for protocol for the start of school on August 18th. Just as with all decisions we made throughout the school year last year, this decision will be made with the guidance of our local health department.

Thank you again for taking the time to advocate for healthy and safe in-person instruction and to share your perspective. I hope you and your family continue to enjoy summer.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Jul 30, 2021, at 12:46 PM, Bridget Larson <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and District 39 Board Members,

We are the parents of a rising third grader at McKenzie Elementary with professional backgrounds in public health and medicine. We would like to start by thanking the district for creating a safe and effective learning environment during the 2020-2021 school year by following a science-based approach and the recommendations of public health authorities. Our son thrived in his second grade in-person class despite all of the mitigations required during the global pandemic.

We are writing now to strongly encourage District 39 to continue to follow a science-based approach and implement a mandatory universal indoor masking policy in our elementary schools at the start of the 2021-22 school year as recommended by The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on 7/27/21. The updated CDC guidance was quickly adopted by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and is also endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). With the continued rise of the more contagious Delta variant, we believe the district has a responsibility to protect our under 12 population until they are also eligible for the Covid-19 vaccines and/or the CDC guidance changes. Despite the commendably high vaccination rates in our community, the Delta variant is approximately twice as contagious as the original virus which demands a higher threshold for herd immunity (estimates of >90%) and recent data indicates individuals infected with the Delta variant carry significantly higher levels of the virus in the nose and throat even when fully vaccinated. While we had truly hoped we would be at a better place by now, the changing nature of the coronavirus demands we continue a layered mitigation approach including universal masking in our elementary schools.

Please also consider that universal indoor masking will reduce lost in-person learning time due to unnecessary quarantines and should allow students to have a more normal in-person experience by facilitating more freedom of movement throughout the school building. In particular, please allow elementary students to return to regular in-person Art, Music, Library and Spanish classes this fall. We know now that surfaces are not the primary mode of transmission for the coronavirus and if everyone is masked, they should be able to participate in those additional classroom environments safely.

In summary, we urge the district and board to stay firm in your resolve to follow the latest scientific evidence and recommendations of the federal, state and local public health authorities. Please implement a universal indoor masking policy for District 39 elementary schools for the start of the 2021-22 school year to protect our unvaccinated under 12 students. Thank you for your continued leadership during this time.

Sincerely,

Bridget K. Larson, MS
Andrew W. Hoel, MD

Sources:

1. CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>
2. IDPH: <http://dph.illinois.gov/news/illinois-fully-aligns-new-cdc-masking-recommendations>
3. CCDPH: <https://cookcountypublichealth.org/2021/07/23/cook-county-department-of-public-health-guidance-for-suburban-cook-county-school-districts/>
4. AAP: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Sent from my iPad

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Re: School masking policies

1 message

Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>
To: Jacqueline Welter <[REDACTED]>

Fri, Jul 30, 2021 at 4:25 PM

Dear Dr. Welter,

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective and expertise. You are correct that this is a really important decision. Focusing on keeping our students and staff safe while also providing ongoing in-person instruction is unquestionably a top priority of ours. As I shared, we are taking the time to make sure we fully understand the recent changes in guidance and how it affects our school protocol. Aligning with and implementing the public health recommendations of the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH served us well as we safely operated in-person schooling last school year and continuing to do so will certainly benefit us as we reopen schools this fall. We expect additional clarification and direction to help guide this decision, and the Board will make the final determination for protocol for the start of school on August 18th. Just as with all decisions we made throughout the school year last year, this decision will be made with the guidance of our local health department.

Thank you again for taking the time to advocate for healthy and safe in-person instruction and to share your perspective. I hope you and your family continue to enjoy summer.

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

School masking policies

1 message

Jacqueline Welter <[REDACTED]>
To: board@wilmette39.org, cremasck@wilmette39.org

Fri, Jul 30, 2021 at 10:42 AM

Dear Superintendent Cremascoli and D39 Board Members,

I am writing this message to you, not just as a proud parent of a McKenzie Elementary second grader, but also as a pediatrician with 14 years of experience as a pediatric ICU hospitalist at Lurie Children's and two years as the full-time clinical pediatrician at the relatively new pediatric immediate care center in the Eden's Plaza. As both mom and Wilmette pediatrician, I cannot more passionately implore you to follow the recommendations set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics ([COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools \(aap.org\)](https://www.aap.org)) and the CDC ([Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s111920-covid-19-schools.html)), and continue mandating universal masking for all students.

Given the well-documented benefits of in-person learning on socialization, mental health, and academic achievement, I agree that focusing on keeping our students safely in the classroom is unquestionably a top priority. Proven common sense practices of universal masking, social distancing, easy access to viral testing, and enhanced cleaning procedures allowed our elementary schools to remain open last year while countless

others across the country were not. I am profoundly grateful that these procedures allowed the District to facilitate in-person learning without widespread transmission of COVID-19 in our schools or the surrounding community, even when community spread was significant. Proof of the effectiveness of the District's policies thus far is right in front of our faces. Universal masking has already proven to be an indispensable tool in this fight for our community, and it will remain crucial until the majority of students, teachers, and staff are fully vaccinated.

As an invested member of IMPACT (Illinois Medical Professionals Action Collaborative Team), the Illinois COVID-19 Medical Collective, COVID-19 School Physician Group, and concerned local physician, I have closely followed the evolving science around COVID-19. Although most children will not become severely ill in the acute phase of COVID, some will. The long-term manifestations of COVID-19 affect nearly 50% of children months following the acute infection causing cognitive and learning difficulties, headaches, insomnia, respiratory problems, and palpitations. Thus, even after recovering from acute SARS-CoV-2 infection, some children will struggle to assimilate back in the classroom. [{Children with long covid \(nih.gov\)}](#)

Children can also bring the virus home to their family and friends, perpetuating the cycle. Finally, though the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are highly effective at preventing serious illness and death, the highly virulent delta variant is causing breakthrough infections in vaccinated persons, allowing them to become vectors to our most vulnerable populations (especially the elderly and immunosuppressed) [{Why Vaccinated People Are Getting 'Breakthrough' Infections - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)}](#)

Making masks optional is not a viable alternative. Families who choose the unmasked option put all children, teachers, and staff at risk for asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic spread of COVID-19. This would domino into easily avoidable disruptions in learning, not to mention the added burden to the District in determining how to police our schools to ensure only vaccinated students are unmasked. Additionally, peer pressure to unmask and the potential for bullying masked students is not inconsequential.

The facts couldn't be clearer. District 39 already knows how to keep our kids in school and keep them safe. Until our schools have reached a point where the majority of students have been vaccinated, we must maintain a universal masking standard.

I do realize, of course, that what may seem like common sense to those of us in the fields of medicine and research has become a hot-button issue for a very vocal minority in our community. While I also understand--and in many cases share--their same frustrations and exhaustion with all the pandemic has heaped on us since March of 2020, I implore you not to cave to the pressure to prematurely abandon proven mitigation strategies that have kept our schools open and safe for all our children, their teachers, and all the essential staff members who make District 39 the pride of our community. In the sage words of my 7 yr old, "I don't mind wearing a mask at school. I like not getting sick and that I am keeping my friends healthy too."

With gratitude,

Dr. Jacqueline Welter, MD FAAP
Pediatrician, Urgent Care
Chicagoland Children's Health Alliance

Additional Resources:

- [Children and COVID-19: State-Level Data Report \(aap.org\)](#).
- Throughout the summer, youth activity camps in multiple states (including Illinois), showed outbreaks that spread to the community in populations of children that were not vaccinated and masks were optional. {[COVID Illinois: Summer camps hit with COVID-19 outbreaks -- are schools next? - ABC7 Chicago](#)} To this particular point, universal masking also significantly reduced the transmission of other viral illnesses such as influenza, rhinovirus, and RSV in our students during the '20-'21 school year. As the masks have come off over the summer, cases of these illnesses are also on the rise.

This notice serves as a reminder that any communication sent or received by Wilmette Public School District 39 may be considered a public record subject to inspection under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Re: Mask Requirements for 2021-2022 School Year

Erica Sitkoff <[REDACTED]>

Thu, Jul 29, 2021 at 11:24 AM

To: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>

Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>, Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Thank you, Amy-I appreciate you taking the time to respond and I truly hope that District 39 will listen to the very strong, unequivocal recommendations by local and national public health authorities and medical groups and require masks when school starts.

If you or the Board would like to discuss further, I can be available at your convenience.

Thanks again for your time-
Erica

> On Jul 29, 2021, at 9:30 AM, Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org> wrote:

>

> Dear Erica,

>

> Thank you for taking the time to write to the board. We appreciate your partnership and your advocacy. I am so glad to hear that your children had a good experience with remote learning last year! At this point, no decisions have been made about masks for the fall. We are continuing to digest and monitor the guidance and will discuss this, along with other mitigation strategies, at our upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting on August 18. The recommendations continue to change and so we are waiting until then to make any decisions. We are so looking forward to having all of our students back in the fall and will weigh all of these decisions with great care and research.

>

> Many thanks,

>

> Amy Poehling

>

>>> On Jul 28, 2021, at 11:17 PM, Erica Sitkoff <[REDACTED]> wrote:

>>>

>>>

>>> Members of the D39 School Board-

>>> I write to you as the parent of an incoming Harper second grader and Highcrest fifth grader to urge you to follow the recommendations of the CDC, the American Association of Pediatrics, and the Cook County Department of Health and require masks for all D39 students.

>>>

>>> My children did remote learning all of last year (and thanks to the amazing Harper and Romona communities, both had incredible school years), but they cannot wait to go back to school in person this fall. However, given that they are too young to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, and it is imperative that the school district protect them and all students by requiring masks and social distancing this upcoming school year.

>>>

>>> Although my family was not in-person last year, I understand that the masking and distancing policies used in D39 were extremely successful, and the students were able to safely learn in person. Given the inability of young children to be vaccinated yet and the unfortunately high and increasing rates of spread in our community, I ask that you require these basic protections for D39 students for the 2021-2022 school year.

>>>

>>> I am available to discuss further at your convenience, and I appreciate your time.

>>>

>>> Erica Sitkoff

>>> [REDACTED]

Fwd: Keep Safety Measures for Next Year

1 message

Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>
To: Nancy Potisuk <potisukn@wilmette39.org>

Thu, Jul 22, 2021 at 3:08 PM

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Keep Safety Measures for Next Year
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:30:26 AM CDT
To: Sarah Rose <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Hi, Sarah,

Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We appreciate your advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 12, 2021, at 10:50 PM, Sarah Rose <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hi, I know there is a small but vocal group that is against safety measures at schools for next year. I want you to know that the vast majority of district 39 parents I know, including myself, want masks/safety measures in place to protect our kids who are not eligible for vaccinations--especially as Delta and new variants are spreading. For the health and safety for our children and entire communities, please keep masking and other safety measures in our schools. It is a small inconvenience that can make a huge positive impact in keeping our children and community healthy.

Thanks for your time,
Sarah Rose

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: CDC and 2021-22 Guidance
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:37:16 AM CDT
To: Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Dear Dr. Hemmer,

Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We appreciate your ongoing advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 15, 2021, at 12:10 AM, Laura Hemmer <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Dr. Cremascoli and School Board Members:

As D39 works on planning for the new school year, I imagine it is frustrating that the CDC (and hence IDPH) guidance for this new year were released at the near-last minute. Thank you for your continued attention to the health and well-being of our D39 children, and their comprehensive school education and social experience must not be jeopardized for a third consecutive year. As detailed in my multiple in-depth written communications to D39 and the School Board last year, the science remains clear that the devastating myriad risks of keeping children out of school are much higher than the risks of COVID-19 transmission in schools. I highly commend D39 for finally committing to full in-person learning every day and with regular school hours. However, many details remain that deserve attention to ensure the safety of our children and community.

With the current relaxed mitigation restrictions, low vaccination rates, increasingly virulent COVID-19 strains, and rising infection rates, the direct risks from the virus to young children who are not yet vaccine eligible have never been higher. Although the CDC guidance allows the option for vaccinated members of the school population to be unmasked indoors, it is important to recognize that the World Health Organization is in opposition to relaxing mask requirements for the vaccinated in indoor settings since vaccination rates worldwide are far too low, potent variants are widely circulating, and vaccination, while tremendously protective against serious illness and death, does not fully protect against transmission to our unvaccinated children especially for the more contagious variants.(1) Even in Wilmette, which is one of the Chicagoland communities with the highest vaccination rate, our rate of 63.6% full vaccination as reported by WBEZ on 7/8/21 is not at the level needed to decrease transmission reliably.(2) From the increasing prevalence of more virulent COVID-19 strains and the

increasing number of cases throughout the United States, it is clear the relaxation of masking and certain other precautions is flawed and unsafe at this point. Even Israel, despite its impressive vaccination rates, has had to recently reinstate masking mandates due to increasing cases.(3) In addition, the continued requirements for quarantining and preventing school attendance for unvaccinated children with any mild illness symptoms and their well-feeling siblings make it imperative that masking continue on everyone in schools to decrease transmission of other routine viral respiratory illnesses in order to minimize time children have to further unnecessarily miss school. Finally, as it is unclear when a booster vaccination is needed (Pfizer is indicating boosters are needed soon and Israel has begun booster vaccinations to at-risk adults), it is nonsensical for anyone to currently unmask in crowded indoor environments.(4,5) Thus, D39 must please **follow the science and require masks for all of the school population inside** in order to not jeopardize the health of our non-vaccine eligible children. Relaxation of indoor mask requirements can be considered after the full D39 population is able to become fully vaccinated, and, of course, special consideration could be given to learners with special language or hearing needs.

The newest CDC suggestions for distancing and cohorting are also flawed, and they risk another year of limited peer interactions and kids not getting enough individualized learning experiences. In non-pandemic times, the top-notch D39 teachers often break kids into small groups to work together on discreetly learning at a level that particular group needs (e.g., more advanced or simpler math problems). Our schools also excelled at offering times for advanced elementary students to come out of class and work with a teacher focused on enjoyable enrichment work. Similarly, the ability to change classes for our middle and junior high students offers differentiated learning as kids need for different subjects. The continuing CDC suggestions for distancing and cohorting risk schools continuing to force kids to learn primarily at one basic level together instead of offering targeted levels for kids' individual needs that our excellent district would normally include. This is frustrating and discouraging for kids needing a slower learning pace and boring and uninspiring for kids learning at a faster pace. I appreciate the effort D39 stated they gave to academically cohorting last year, but this is difficult and imperfect in a district our size obviously. I fear our schools may still even ridiculously enforce cohorting for outdoor recess as did D39 throughout last year which unnecessarily limits fun and loses the necessary development of skills for navigating social playground relationships.(6,7)

Unfortunately, CDC, IDPH, etc. continue to disregard the valuable experience that comes from hospital inpatient environments where mitigation efforts are good in terms of symptom screening and mask compliance, but where social distancing and cohorting between faculty and staff is impossible. As I noted in my letter dated 2/2/21 to you, pre-vaccine, many hospitals periodically checked for COVID-19 antibodies. Positive rates, which indicate prior COVID-19 infection, have not been markedly higher in healthcare workers than the surrounding community (and this includes for those caring directly for COVID-19 positive patients) as published in multiple studies including in JAMA and CDC's own MMWR.(8,9) Thus, distancing and cohorting seem far less critical than other safety precautions (e.g., masks and symptom screening) when those other mitigation elements are strongly implemented. D39 needs to ease strict distancing requirements to allow productive small group work while maintaining masks inside, and **D39 should fully abandon cohorting** to help abate the irreparable harm already imposed on our children. Thank you in advance for your careful consideration and attention to these and so many other details as will be required for a safe and successful school year during the ongoing pandemic.

Sincerely,
Laura Hemmer, M.D., FASA
(children 8 and 11 years old)

References

- 1) <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/06/29/1011270829/coronavirus-faq-im-vaccinated-and-confused-do-i-need-to-mask-up-or-not>
- 2) https://www.wbez.org/stories/vaccination-rates-across-chicago-suburbs-range-from-under-15-to-over-80/01c45765-cbf4-4ead-97d7-c76a7b93f1e9?subscription=true&utm_source=Newsletter_Daily-Rundown-Non-Member&utm_medium=WBEZEmail&utm_campaign=Daily_Newsletter_Daily-Rundown_%2020210708&utm_content=7%2F8%2F2021&DE=WBEZEmail
- 3) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57594155>
- 4) <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/08/health/pfizer-waning-immunity-bn/index.html>
- 5) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-vaccine-pfizer-booster/2021/07/12/ce5ceed4-e30e-11eb-88c5-4fd6382c47cb_story.html
- 6) https://messaging-custom-newsletters.nytimes.com/template/oakv2?abVariantId=1&campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_2021_0526&instance_id=31568&nl=the-morning&productCode=NN®i_id=117562247&segment_id=59023&te=1&uri=nyt%3A%2F%2Fnewsletter%2F976a5c68-e6f4-5a57-b358-f81a880906cb&user_id=2068ffdc24ff621883edd2cc59669b8b
- 7) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/03/17/play-deprivation-during-pandemic-is-big-problem-for-kids/>
- 8) <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2769322>
- 9) <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6935e2.htm>

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Simple can become easy...
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:35:36 AM CDT
To: EJ Vaughan <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Dear Elaine, Schuyler, Chance and Sky,

Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We appreciate your advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 21, 2021, at 1:03 PM, EJ Vaughan <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Advocating for our children and their wellbeing is a top priority for me. In light of this, I'm humbly sending this email as an appeal to your understanding of how simple things can become easy and impactful.

I am grateful for all of the pivoting our district has done throughout our pandemic experience. I mean that most sincerely. The remote education my children received last year was better than I could have ever imagined. It was imperfect, as is the nature of life...AND it is still true that it was stellar, given the circumstances. My children flourished throughout the year and District 39's role in that is undeniable.

Thank you, in advance, for reading this. I welcome any and all feedback, including that which challenges me.

Multiple things can be true at once:

- 1). Children have a greater potential to flourish when IN SCHOOL and the GOAL is to keep schools OPEN.
- 2). Reputable studies do support the fact that children and adolescents typically fare better than adults with Covid in the SHORT TERM (that's all we have to look at thus far).
- 3). More time and studies are needed to elucidate the LONG TERM physical and mental/emotional consequences of children who contract Covid (this is still a very gray area).

- 4). Due to layered exposure mitigation practiced since March 2020 because of Covid, physicians expect to see a high number of all respiratory viruses circulating once kids are back together (it's already happening), especially once children are INDOORS together at school.
 - 5). Data supports the fact that MASK WEARING reduces transmission of Covid and other viruses.
 - 6). There are also adults in the school building who deserve to be protected so schools can stay OPEN.
 - 7). ALL CHILDREN (ages 12 and below) are unvaccinated, so masking indoors is highly protective for them and for those around them, including staff and families.
 - 8). Due to the lack of long term studies on the SAFETY AND EFFICACY of the vaccines, many adolescents are still not vaccinated (it is reported that ONLY 1/3 are vaccinated currently). So masking, when indoors, is highly protective for them and those around them, including their families.
 - 9). Studies show that adolescents are healthier (in multiple ways) with CONSISTENT BOUNDARIES that highlight what they have in common (dealing with a new normal), instead of highlighting what makes them different (vaccine status). **So everyone wearing masks at school, 5th grade and up too, supports this type of environment AND protects everyone at a higher level against Covid etc., so schools can stay OPEN.**
-

Or we can look at it another way that is "simple"...

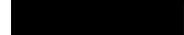
It can easily be broken down to cause and effect...masking ALL kids and staff in district 39 for a year, will help keep schools OPEN and help protect everyone in our community.

Let's not experiment on our kids or teachers/staff. There is still too much we DO NOT KNOW YET. Put masks on ALL students and staff for a year, until more information is available. Err on the side of caution.

Most people think masks are pretty simple, and with more practice and acceptance, the conversation about masking will become easy too.

In wellness,

Elaine Vaughan
Schuyler Vaughan

 age 9
 age 13

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Consider District 39's Elementary Masking Policy
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:33:47 AM CDT
To: Amanda Adams <aadams1883@gmail.com>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Dear Amanda and Rick,

Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We appreciate your advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 14, 2021, at 3:48 PM, Amanda Adams <aadams1883@gmail.com> wrote:

Members of the District 39 School Board and Superintendent Cremascoli:

I would like to start by expressing gratitude. Our family is grateful that you acted bravely, allowing in-person schooling to be an option at a time when many were not willing to take the risk. You backed your decision with sound science and data, and took measures to make school as safe as possible for students and staff.

Our three children will attend McKenzie (2 in K and 1 in 3rd) in the fall. My husband and I are both fully vaccinated and we adhered to mask requirements during the pandemic. Our family hopes the board will consider removing the mask mandate for children prior to the school year. Metrics tracking the spread and impact of COVID-19 upon our young students reveal the low risk of the virus. Now that our elderly population has been widely vaccinated and 94.4% of D39's teachers have been protected, I believe it is time to remove the burden from our children. The benefits of maskless school instruction outweigh the relatively-low risk of COVID-19 for children. I fully supported masks when the risks to our vulnerable populations were greater, but the evolving circumstances have changed the equation. If things change for the worse (increased risk to children for example), then I will wholeheartedly support the appropriate response. For now however, I ask that you please craft policy consistent with the facts at hand. You did not allow fear inform your decision last year, and I ask that you be advised by data, not the loudest, fearful voices this year.

I'll leave it to the scientists to provide you with information on the low risk of COVID-19 to children (here is a good [summary](#)), and stick to what I know as someone who worked with young children in community mental health around the country. Seeing each other's faces is important. Learning to read facial cues is important. An article in parentingscience.com warns:

"...children who have more trouble identifying emotion in faces are more likely to have peer problems and learning difficulties (Goodfellow and Nowicki 2009). Preschoolers with poor face-reading skills for their age are more likely to have externalizing behavioral problems, like hyperactivity (Chronaki et al 2015a). If they tend to be shy, such children are also more likely to suffer from anxiety (Sette et al 2016)."

Mental health professionals who work with young children are trained to recognize and verbally name expressions of their clients and to teach their parents to do the same. With this foundation, children can begin to notice, name and regulate their emotional state. While most children have adapted remarkably well to wearing masks, doing what we ask of them, we have a responsibility to consider the lasting developmental effects from a lack of facial expressions in the classroom.

Schools around the country will soon be re-opening, many of them without a mask mandate. Please leave it up to each family to weigh the risks and make an informed decision about whether their child must wear a mask. Thank you for taking the time to read this and for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Amanda and Rick Adams

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Keep Safety Measures for Next Year
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:30:26 AM CDT
To: Sarah Rose <[REDACTED]m>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Hi, Sarah,

Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We appreciate your advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 12, 2021, at 10:50 PM, Sarah Rose <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hi, I know there is a small but vocal group that is against safety measures at schools for next year. I want you to know that the vast majority of district 39 parents I know, including myself, want masks/safety measures in place to protect our kids who are not eligible for vaccinations--especially as Delta and new variants are spreading. For the health and safety for our children and entire communities, please keep masking and other safety measures in our schools. It is a small inconvenience that can make a huge positive impact in keeping our children and community healthy.

Thanks for your time,
Sarah Rose

From: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Subject: Re: School mask requirement 2021

Date: July 22, 2021 at 10:42:09 AM CDT

To: Kavita Alford <[REDACTED]>

Dear Kavita,

I want to thank you for taking the time to share your perspective, this additional resource and your advocacy.

At this time, we are working in collaboration with the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to understand the impact of the new CDC guidelines, as well as those offered by the AAP, on our D39 procedures for fall. We expect to receive additional clarification and guidance throughout July. That said, current guidance indicates that fully vaccinated individuals may have the option not to wear a mask indoors, including at school. We are seeking additional clarification from the CCDPH regarding masking guidance for unvaccinated individuals. We understand that everyone is eager for a decision to be made soon, as are we. However, in consideration of the evolving landscape, making this important decision with a more in-depth understanding of the guidance as well as a review of the most timely, relevant information and local data closer to the start of school is prudent and will best support our efforts to protect the health and safety of our students and staff. Following the guidance offered to us by the medical and public health experts at CCDPH and IDPH served us well throughout last school year to prevent school outbreaks and transmission within our schools. Continuing to do so will, no doubt, be helpful as we reopen schools again this fall.

Aside from masking protocol, District 39 will continue to implement layered mitigation strategies to support health and safety. These strategies include classroom arrangements for social distancing, lunch protocol with increased distancing, frequent hand washing and hand sanitizer availability, regular cleaning and enhanced disinfecting of classroom spaces and common areas, supports and reminders for students and staff to stay home when sick, access to Covid-19 testing, and improved air ventilation.

Thank you again for sharing your perspective and your advocacy. We will continue to update families as we learn more and plan for the upcoming school year. Please look for our next D39 family update on July 28. In addition, a detailed review of our layered mitigation strategies is being planned for the Board's Committee of the Whole Meeting on August 18.

In the meantime, I wish you and your family a joyful and healthy second half to summer!

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Jul 21, 2021, at 8:44 PM, Kavita Alford <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Superintendent Cremascoli and D39 Board Members,

As a parent of students in D39 and as a pediatrician serving the children in our community, I urge you to follow the recent guidance of the the American Academy of Pediatrics to require face masks in order to accomplish the primary goal of having children physically present in school.

With the recent emergence and prevalence of more transmissible variants of SARS-CoV-2 and with our young children not yet eligible for the vaccine, layered mitigation measures in school are critically important to keep our children, staff and community members healthy and safe. Although children rarely get severely ill from COVID-19, some do, and we are still learning about the impacts of the new variants on disease severity and long term sequelae in both children and adults. We are continuing to see morbidity in children from COVID-19, including the associated multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), and long COVID (prolonged symptoms of disease). Children can also bring the virus home to their family and friends, perpetuating the cycle. There have been many reports of outbreaks in schools, sleep away camps, close contact sports, etc., where masking was not mandated. Though the vaccine has proven to be quite effective, it is not 100%, leaving even the vaccinated (especially those that are older than 65 or immunosuppressed, etc.) at continued risk.

Making masks optional is not a viable alternative. Children who do not wear a mask put other children at risk for illness and for quarantine, and they place additional risk to teachers and their families as well, reducing time in school for many. Mask usage is most effective when all persons wear them, decreasing risk of asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic spread of the virus.

Concerns regarding safety of longer term mask wearing have not been supported by any data. Masking is a simple, safe, cheap intervention that would allow our children and teachers to stay in school. Last year, the children in our district overwhelmingly proved how adaptable they were to wearing masks, and the masks did not appear to significantly interfere with their learning or social interaction.

I very much appreciate the time, commitment, concern and guidance you have all put into making our schools safe and accessible during the pandemic. Until all our children have the opportunity to be vaccinated, I strongly believe that following recent mask guidance published by the AAP will help keep our children physically present in school. Masks have proven to be an effective, simple way of preventing the spread of viral infections (Covid 19, RSV, flu, etc.). They will reduce our risk for school outbreaks and decrease unnecessary time off work for parents and school staff.

I am attaching a letter that IMPACT (Illinois Medical Professionals Action Collaborative Team) recently sent to our state leaders advocating for continued universal masking in schools, which I have signed along with over 300 medical professionals.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,

Kavita Alford, MD

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e80f9e9abd507573ed7f6c0/t/60f60313be61443e655e5c85/1626735379685/IMPACT+letter+on+school+reopening+7.2021.pdf>
<IMPACT+letter+on+school+reopening+7.2021.pdf>

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: School mask requirement 2021
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:31:52 AM CDT
To: Kavita Alford <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Dear Dr. Alford,

Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We so appreciate your advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 21, 2021, at 8:44 PM, Kavita Alford <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Superintendent Cremascoli and D39 Board Members,

As a parent of students in D39 and as a pediatrician serving the children in our community, I urge you to follow the recent guidance of the the American Academy of Pediatrics to require face masks in order to accomplish the primary goal of having children physically present in school.

With the recent emergence and prevalence of more transmissible variants of SARS-CoV-2 and with our young children not yet eligible for the vaccine, layered mitigation measures in school are critically important to keep our children, staff and community members healthy and safe. Although children rarely get severely ill from COVID-19, some do, and we are still learning about the impacts of the new variants on disease severity and long term sequelae in both children and adults. We are continuing to see morbidity in children from COVID-19, including the associated multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), and long COVID (prolonged symptoms of disease). Children can also bring the virus home to their family and friends, perpetuating the cycle. There have been many reports of outbreaks in schools, sleep away camps, close contact sports, etc., where masking was not mandated. Though the vaccine has proven to be quite effective, it is not 100%, leaving even the vaccinated (especially those that are older than 65 or immunosuppressed, etc.) at continued risk.

Making masks optional is not a viable alternative. Children who do not wear a mask put other children at risk for illness and for quarantine, and they place additional risk to teachers and their families as well, reducing time in school for many. Mask usage is most effective when all persons wear them, decreasing risk of asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic spread of the virus.

Concerns regarding safety of longer term mask wearing have not been supported by any data. Masking is a simple, safe, cheap intervention that would allow our children and teachers to stay in school. Last year, the children in our district overwhelmingly proved how adaptable they were to wearing masks, and the masks did not appear to significantly interfere with their learning or social interaction.

I very much appreciate the time, commitment, concern and guidance you have all put into making our schools safe and accessible during the pandemic. Until all our children have the opportunity to be vaccinated, I strongly believe that following recent mask guidance published by the AAP will help keep our children physically present in school. Masks have proven to be an effective, simple way of preventing the spread of viral infections (Covid 19, RSV, flu, etc.). They will reduce our risk for school outbreaks and decrease unnecessary time off work for parents and school staff.

I am attaching a letter that IMPACT (Illinois Medical Professionals Action Collaborative Team) recently sent to our state leaders advocating for continued universal masking in schools, which I have signed along with over 300 medical professionals.

Thank you again for your time and consideration,

Kavita Alford, MD

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e80f9e9abd507573ed7f6c0/t/60f60313be61443e655e5c85/1626735379685/IMPACT+letter+on+school+reopening+7.2021.pdf>
<IMPACT+letter+on+school+reopening+7.2021.pdf>

From: Amy Poehling <poehlinga@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: District 39 / Optional Masks
Date: July 22, 2021 at 11:38:53 AM CDT
To: Brian Atkinson <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>

Dear Brian and Luanne,

I apologize for the delay in my response. Thank you for writing to the board to share your thoughts. We appreciate your advocacy and partnership!

As you have heard from recent updates, we continue to monitor the recommendations coming from the CDC, IDPH and CCDPH. The district will send communication about our planning for the fall every two weeks. We are holding off, for now, on any definitive decisions about masking so we can take into consideration further guidance these regulatory bodies may offer.

Many thanks,

Amy Poehling

On Jul 9, 2021, at 4:48 PM, Brian Atkinson <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Board Members and Superintendent Cremascoli,

We are writing to strongly urge you to allow for optional mask wearing for the young students within District 39. Our district benefited greatly from your responsive efforts to the needs and wants of the community during the 2020-2021 school year. Fortunately, the students were able to be together in person for the majority of the school year. While they benefited greatly from that experience it still didn't reflect a traditional learning environment. Pursuant to the guidance from the CDC and the IDHP released today stating that masks are "encouraged", we are writing to ask that you again stand up for the children in our district and allow for masks to be **optional** indoors and outside for students during the 2021-2022 school year.

The students of District 39 aren't yet eligible for the EUA vaccine and may not be during the school year, but they are a part of the lowest risk cohort during the entire pandemic. They represent the least risk, yet are carrying the greatest burdens at this time. Our now 2nd grader at McKenzie would come home daily last year with a wet, dirty mask that had been worn throughout the day. He developed an anxious chewing habit that has just now subsided 4 weeks into summer vacation. It is difficult to imagine there are significant health benefits to having a dirty, wet cloth across the face of a 7 year old. Further, there are significant limitations in communication, learning social cues and in-class distractions.

We recognize there is pressure from the State to mandate masks, but we beg you to consider the local cases, minimal risks and parental requests in making masks optional. The adults that have access to the vaccine can take it, but our children a) don't have access and b) shouldn't be mandated to get it in order to experience normal school life.

Thank you for your consideration and we hope you will allow for flexibility in the rule making for the 2021-2022 school year.

Sincerely,

Brian & Luanne Atkinson

From: Kari Cremascoli <cremasck@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Consider District 39's Elementary Masking Policy
Date: July 21, 2021 at 3:32:34 PM CDT
To: Amanda Adams <[REDACTED]>

Dear Amanda and Rick,

Thank you for your kind words and your ongoing advocacy.

At this time, we are working in collaboration with the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to understand the impact of the new CDC guidelines on our D39 procedures and expect to receive additional clarification and guidance throughout July. We expect more updates over the next few weeks from the CCDPH and the ISBE regarding guidance for localized decision-making for school this fall.

That said, current guidance indicates that fully vaccinated individuals may have the option not to wear a mask indoors, including at school. We are seeking additional clarification from the CCDPH regarding masking guidance for unvaccinated individuals. We understand that everyone is eager for a decision to be made soon, as are we. However, with ongoing changes to the guidelines and an evolving landscape, making this important decision with a more in-depth understanding of the guidance as well as a review of the most timely, relevant information and local data closer to the start of school is prudent and will best support our efforts to protect the health and safety of our students and staff.

Thank you again for sharing your perspective and your advocacy. We will continue to update families as we learn more and plan for the upcoming school year. Please look for our next D39 family update on July 28. In addition, a detailed review of our layered mitigation strategies is being planned for the Board's Committee of the Whole Meeting on August 18.

In the meantime, I wish you and your family a joyful and healthy second half to summer!

Your partner in education,

Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org ~ 847.512.6030

On Jul 14, 2021, at 3:48 PM, Amanda Adams <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Members of the District 39 School Board and Superintendent Cremascoli:

I would like to start by expressing gratitude. Our family is grateful that you acted bravely, allowing in-person schooling to be an option at a time when many were not willing to take the risk. You backed your decision with sound science and data, and took measures to make school as safe as possible for students and staff.

Our three children will attend McKenzie (2 in K and 1 in 3rd) in the fall. My husband and I are both fully vaccinated and we adhered to mask requirements during the pandemic. Our family hopes the board will consider removing the mask mandate for children prior to the school year. Metrics tracking the spread and impact of COVID-19 upon our young students reveal the low risk of the virus. Now that our elderly population has been widely vaccinated and 94.4% of D39's teachers have been protected, I believe it is time to remove the burden from our children. The benefits of maskless school instruction outweigh the relatively-low risk of COVID-19 for children. I fully supported masks when the risks to our vulnerable populations were greater, but the evolving circumstances have changed the equation. If things change for the worse (increased risk to children for example), then I will wholeheartedly support the appropriate response. For now however, I ask that you please craft policy consistent with the facts at hand. You did not allow fear inform your decision last year, and I ask that you be advised by data, not the loudest, fearful voices this year.

I'll leave it to the scientists to provide you with information on the low risk of COVID-19 to children (here is a good [summary](#)), and stick to what I know as someone who worked with young children in community mental health around the country. Seeing each other's faces is important. Learning to read facial cues is important. An article in parentingscience.com warns:

"...children who have more trouble identifying emotion in faces are more likely to have peer problems and learning difficulties (Goodfellow and Nowicki 2009). Preschoolers with poor face-reading skills for their age are more likely to have externalizing behavioral problems, like hyperactivity (Chronaki et al 2015a). If they tend to be shy, such children are also more likely to suffer from anxiety (Sette et al 2016)."

Mental health professionals who work with young children are trained to recognize and verbally name expressions of their clients and to teach their parents to do the same. With this foundation, children can begin to notice, name and regulate their emotional state. While most children have adapted remarkably well to wearing masks, doing what we ask of them, we have a responsibility to consider the lasting developmental effects from a lack of facial expressions in the classroom.

Schools around the country will soon be re-opening, many of them without a mask mandate. Please leave it up to each family to weigh the risks and make an informed decision about whether their child must wear a mask. Thank you for taking the time to read this and for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Amanda and Rick Adams

From: Tracey Brownrigg <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Return to Normal
Date: July 20, 2021 at 3:20:37 PM CDT
To: board@wilmette39.org

I am writing to you in reference to the 2021-22 school year. Last year I continually heard masks were no big deal, masks don't hurt the kids, they get used to it. Amazingly none of this was true.

As the summer passes there have been several studies about the dangers of masking children. My child's struggles with the mask. No, he did not get used to it, yes it hurt him and yes, it made him physically ill. Worst of all it created an immense amount of anxiety about school. School devastated him. He felt so ill it was nearly impossible for him to finish his homework which became a horrible cycle with the school refusing to understand the position the mask put him in. He is truly starting to panic about school again. He wants to learn but his ability to do so suffers in a mask.

According to Dr. Ben Carson our country has reached herd immunity. This means that we are in a place where most are safe from the virus and it is passed considerably slower. The number of cases in Illinois are so low that even if they rise they are low. This process was started to keep our hospitals working. The hospitals are open. There are multiple treatments for Covid 19. The chances of the illness being passed are significantly lower than the previous school year.

Dr. Mark Siegal noted that the number of cases are low and that kids are not spreaders so the harm of masks now outweigh the benefits. Medical things should not harm more than they help.

I fully understand some people are nervous about this disease. If so, they are free to wear masks, their children are free to wear masks. Other children and families should no longer dictate the mask mandate. The state of Illinois handed the power over to the school boards and school boards should hand that power over to parents. Parents should have the power to decide what is best for their students. The emergency is now over. Emergency power to decide should end.

Surrounding states have all decided that masking mandates are not needed in schools. They are not needed in Illinois. Please make the responsible choice and let families regain the power to make the decision for their own children.

Sincerely,
Tracey Brownrigg