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June 11, 2021

Dear Members of the Readington Community,

Over the past week my office has received calls to action from parents with regard to the mask mandates imposed on our students. Specifically, there are members of our school community who are asking that I use my authority as the Superintendent of Schools to end the mandate in schools. This topic has elicited many thoughts and opinions; all of which are thoughtfully considered. In the end, and as a school official, I must comply with the Governor's Executive Order 175 requiring masks in schools. However, the Governor has clarified that the indoor mask exception may be applied to situations in which the district determines, at its discretion and based on its assessment of the individual circumstances, that a period of extreme heat warrants students and staff to remove masks while indoors to protect individual health. Students and staff have always had the ability to take a mask break. Many mask breaks are built into the academic day. With the hot weather, we will continue to allow mask breaks should an individual in our building require one for their own health and safety. **Starting Monday, students can take their mask break seated at their desks. Staff may take breaks during instructional times seated at their desks or as done previously, when alone in their work space.** Our air conditioned buildings provide a comfortable climate for learning and working. Masks will be required in common spaces such as hallways and restrooms. Please have a conversation with your child about the wearing of masks and potential need for a mask break during the day.

With all of the outdoor events that are coming up in our schools, we would like to make it very clear that masks are optional outside. Students, staff, and visitors may remove masks while on our premises outdoors.

We have encouraged bus drivers to open windows and use air conditioning when possible, but we will provide flexibility and allow masks to be optional on the school bus as the weather warms.

Our staff are using a thoughtful, discretionary approach to mask wearing and we are allowing students to make individual and personal decisions about their mask breaks. We will urge students to keep their distance from others as an added layer of precaution. Please talk with your child about what you would like him or her to do regarding wearing a mask and taking a break.

The 2021-2022 school year is not yet upon us. We are unsure as to what Executive Orders will exist in the future. I am sure there will be continued discussion at the Board and administrative level revolving around masks for next school year.

I kindly ask for your patience and perseverance as we navigate the ever-changing landscape in regard to the pandemic. The past 15 months have been uncharacteristically difficult for members of our community. We are almost to the finish line where we look to celebrate the accomplishments of our students through graduation, clap outs, and other special events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Hart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Jonathan Hart, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools