

December 12, 2021

West Branch Area Students, Families, and Staff:

On Friday, December 10, 2021, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court struck down the mask mandate that had been imposed on September 7, 2021 by Order of the Acting Secretary of Health. In short, the masking mandate inside school buildings has been declared invalid by the Supreme Court and is no longer in effect.

With the end of the masking order, masking decisions revert to the local school district level as outlined in our approved Health and Safety Plan. Effective tomorrow, Monday December 13, 2021, masks will be voluntary for all students and staff. We strongly support any parents who wish to have their children remain masked and will ensure a comfortable environment in which to do so. **Masks remain required on all school buses as per federal requirements and in certain areas within the building such as the Nurse's Office.**

As per our Health & Safety Plan, masking may be reinstated for short periods of time if we experience an outbreak of positive cases among students and staff. To date, we have had very low numbers for the past 3-5 weeks and hope to remain at these low levels. Our best defense is still your help in staying home when symptomatic so as to minimize spread.

Please know that all quarantine guidelines remain the same and unmasked students and staff will be required to quarantine in close contact situations where vaccinated students and staff may not have to quarantine.

As is our ongoing position, the District strongly encourages all unvaccinated students and staff to consider the CDC and DoH guidelines for masking.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation as we continue to maneuver the never-ending changes.

Micki Dutrow