



MEETING NOTES

Meeting Notes are not official until voted on by the Board of Education at its following Regular Meeting.

- A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.
- A2 Members present: Mark Abate, Paul Lambert, Nadia Long, Brian Perry, and Lisa Whiting
- A3 Everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

B PROGRAMS/PRESENTATIONS

- B1 COVID-19 Update – Mr. Mike Abraham, Director of Student Well-Being

Mr. Abraham began with the protocols recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), and Franklin County Public Health (FCPH). As COVID-19 cases continue to increase, we are very concerned about the health and safety of our students and staff. Therefore, Mr. Abraham has consulted with district principals and the leadership team and analyzed all of the recommended guidelines from all of the above health entities.

- The following are their recommendations for K-12 schools, similar to the protocols we had in place this past school year. These include strongly recommending vaccination for eligible patients, using face masks in K-12 settings, maximizing the distance between people, prompt identification and providing appropriate care for people exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, practicing good hygiene, and routine cleaning protocols will continue throughout all school buildings and buses.

The CDC continues to require that masks be worn on all public transportation, including school buses. This requirement is regardless of vaccination status. As was the case last school year, all students will have assigned seats on school buses.

Another recommended protocol is strategies for increasing ventilation in buildings. I have talked with our Operations staff and have been assured that we have maximized our output and intake through our control system program. All of our buildings are air-conditioned, and we have recently replaced the air handling units in ten of our schools to improve our indoor air quality (IAQ). The building HVAC systems will continue to be programmed to bring in more outside air throughout the day. All air handling systems will utilize the maximum MERV rating filter for each specific system. All health entities continue to

Facial Coverings

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have said that COVID-19 spreads via respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

These droplets may pose an inhalation threat even when the person they are speaking with is at a distance and in an enclosed space.

Masks provide a barrier that prevents these respiratory droplets and smaller aerosolized particles from spreading from one person to another. They protect the person who is wearing the mask by preventing the spread of that person's respiratory droplets as others speak, cough, sneeze or even sing. If both people involved in the conversation are wearing masks, it limits the particles passing between them.

Source:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/schools/K-12-Schools-Guidance.pdf>

recommend at least three feet of social distancing. We will continue to have assigned seating during lunch. Hand sanitizer will continue to be placed in classrooms, throughout the buildings, and on school buses.

When we receive notice of a positive case in our buildings, contact tracing will be conducted by our school nursing staff following the guidelines of FCPH. In addition, ODH has released the following quarantine guidelines after exposure. Please note that this guidance applies to **contacts** who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. The person who tested positive for COVID-19 should follow standard isolation procedures.

- **Quarantine is not necessary** for students and adults possibly exposed to COVID-19 in K-12 school settings, regardless of vaccination status, if **ALL** the following prevention measures have been in place:
 - **Masking** for students and staff (regardless of vaccination status).
 - **Physical distancing** is maximized (at least 3 feet between desks).
 - Documented **COVID-19 prevention policies** (e.g., identifying individuals experiencing symptoms, strategies to increase ventilation, protocols for cleaning, etc.).
- If not all prevention measures listed above were in place, **quarantine is not necessary** for fully vaccinated* students and adults provided they adhere to the following precautions:
 - Wear a mask indoors, as much as possible, either for 14 days or until a viral (PCR or antigen) test performed three to five days after exposure has come back as negative.
 - In addition, they should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following exposure.
- If not all prevention measures listed above were in place, **quarantine is not necessary** for students and adults who are not fully vaccinated if the **exposed person** was wearing a **face mask** consistently and correctly and physical distancing was maintained. However, they should wear a mask indoors as much as possible and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following exposure.

Quarantine should be required if the student or teacher is not fully vaccinated, and layers of prevention were not in place as described above.

If quarantine is necessary because layers of prevention were not in place as described above, it should last for at least seven days since the last exposure, and the contact should have a negative viral (PCR or antigen) test collected on or after day five. Individuals should watch for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days.

- During quarantine, contacts should be advised to stay home and away from others as much as possible. If they become symptomatic at any point, they should receive a clinical evaluation or testing for COVID-19.

The above guidelines for students and adults only apply to exposures occurring in classroom settings. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and exposed to COVID-19 outside the school setting should refrain from attending in-person school and participating in organized sports or extracurriculars throughout their quarantine period.

Ms. Whiting thanked Mr. Abraham for the review.

Mr. Perry asked for clarification on the modified quarantine guidelines. Is it correct that if individuals wear masks, they are eligible for the modified quarantine guidelines? And, if they are not wearing a mask, they do not qualify for the modified quarantine guideline? Mr. Abraham responded that this is correct. Mr. Perry then stated that masking equals more in-person days of education. Therefore, if wearing a mask is a choice, and you choose not to have your child wear a mask, you will be risking fewer in-person days of education because of the potential for more days of quarantine. Mr. Abraham then clarified that the mask recommendation is for indoors.

Mrs. Long stated that in May, our status was all-in, and masks were required. Are these the same health department recommendations for the start of the coming school year? Mr. Abraham answered yes. Mrs. Long then asked if we would be recommending the same preventative steps (health checks at home) as last school year. Mr. Abraham responded that those same protocols are in our current plan for the coming school year.

C ROUTINES

- C1 The agenda is correct with the addition of the late-breaking items.
- C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda.
- C3 The Board of Education approved the July 2021 Treasurer’s Report.
- C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
 - a. July 8, 2021 – Regular meeting
 - b. July 8, 2021 – Meeting notes

D PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

Ms. Whiting thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Due to the large number of people wishing to address the Board, we are limiting, as provided by Board policy, the length of public participation to forty-five minutes. The forms are in the order in which they were submitted.

NOTE: The audio recording of the meeting was difficult to decipher due to background noise. I was unable to hear the speakers who didn’t talk into the microphone. You will see many unfinished sentences throughout the public participation.

Mark Karman

Mr. Karman stated that ASL students rely on facial expressions when communicating. This is limited when wearing a face mask and challenging for students who cannot convey their thoughts in any other way.

David Crane

Mr. Crane is the parent of two children in the district. Both of his children have been identified with special needs. I am here to advocate for my daughter and ask that you require masks to be worn in school to keep those who cannot yet be vaccinated as safe as possible. My daughter was born with a rare condition that compromises her immune system and cannot fight off infection. I know some others will be speaking tonight about their freedoms and rights, and I believe my daughter has the right to attend school safely, in person. Ultimately, the district's decision should come down to there is no risk to have a mask policy in place. I know they are uncomfortable. I wear one eight hours a day at my job, and doctor's nurses have been wearing them during surgery for a very long time. There is a considerable risk of not implementing a mask mandate. You'll be looking at hundreds of students who have traveled who knows where congregating together, a recipe for disaster. We don't want to be standing here two to three months from now, wishing we had done something different.

Teresa Johnson

I have a daughter in third grade, and I am a microbiologist and an educator at Ohio State. I am here as a scientist, educator, and parent. Regardless, I shouldn't be here talking to you about mask mandates in school, nor should anyone else in line to speak here tonight. Whether our children wear a mask to school is not a matter of legal opinion. It isn't about how many liberals or conservatives live in Hilliard or whether your decision will impact future levy support. The virus doesn't care about our opinions on that. It is just doing what it does, replicating and spreading through the air to as many warm bodies as possible. Our children under twelve are not vaccinated. You can tell me whatever statistic you want about how many children get seriously ill with this disease or remain asymptomatic. The fact is they can catch and spread this virus which causes at least two problems. One, any one of our children might be the next child that ends up in the ICU on a ventilator or with a lifetime disability due to COVID. We don't know enough about the long-term effects of this virus to understand what even a mild case might do to our children's future health. Two, our children might transmit the virus at home to an at-risk family member who, even though vaccinated, are not guaranteed to avoid a serious case of this disease. This is exactly what happened to a close friend who was fully vaccinated. Her daughter brought the virus home while outside playing softball. My friend is now in her fifth week of debilitating COVID symptoms and unable to work or engage in a phone call because she can't catch her breath. Any child catching the virus, even if they remain asymptomatic, will provide the virus with opportunities to create the next variant that might overpower our vaccines.

We successfully avoided transmission in the classroom last school year because of the layered health protocols. All of our children were socially distanced and masked. Isn't our obligation as educators to teach our children to use evidence-based judgment? If we aren't going to model scientific thinking in our classrooms, then we are doing more than just endangering our children's health. We fail to help them learn and think logically and scientifically, which will perpetuate the current misinformation crisis we are currently mired. Without the option for child vaccination, one parent's choice to not mask their child puts all of our children and community at greater risk, and that is unacceptable. We don't make it optional for children to bring guns to school or make food safety optional in restaurants because the action of one person has the potential to harm those around them. We don't have to choose between our children's social and emotional well-being. We must have all of our unvaccinated children in masks.

Ashley Hammac

I am a pediatric primary care nurse practitioner. I practice at Nationwide Children's Hospital mobile care unit in a unique partnership with Columbus City Schools. My daughter is entering kindergarten this year

at Washington Elementary. On Sunday, the CDC identified Franklin County as an area with high transmission of COVID-19. Just one month ago, we were only at the moderate level. The current rise in COVID-19 cases is driven by the Delta variant that spreads more efficiently. Each person infects an average of five to six additional people, twice the amount of the original virus. The Delta variant will cause a severe infection in unvaccinated individuals and can also be contracted and transmitted by fully vaccinated individuals. Infected individuals who are fully vaccinated are typically asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic but can still spread the virus to others.

Wearing a mask is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of transmission and is most effective when everyone is wearing a mask. The benefits of learning together are clear. The benefits of in person learning outweigh the risks of many students who are not eligible to be vaccinated, and other COVID-19 variants are more contagious. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all schools require all students and staff to wear masks indoors unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit their use. The CDC recommends that communities with substantial or high COVID-19 transmission rates require all individuals to mask up while indoors or in schools regardless of vaccination status. The ODH also strongly recommends the use of masks in schools. Students exposed in school while not wearing a mask will be subject to a strict at-home quarantine regardless of symptoms in contrast to the modified quarantine for students protected by masks and other preventative measures. We do not want to disrupt in-person learning. There are now more cases being reported compared to last year. This updated quarantine rule will present a huge to schools and families. Mask wearing reduces the spread of COVID-19, as demonstrated by multiple studies completed over the last school year. As such, masks should be required in schools across the district to safely get all students back in school. While there is some rationale for limiting mask-wearing to those under the age of twelve, the current vaccination rate of children ages twelve to seventeen is insufficient to support this recommendation.

Stephanie Cramm

Thank you for your service. Parents, thank you for taking the time to be here. I stand before you, first and foremost for my kids. My kids are joyful, cheerful, and full of life. Unfortunately, I saw some of this sucked out of them this past year, and my husband and I kept them out of school on occasion because they lost their love for learning. My children are between ten and twelve, and this is the time we are planting seeds within them. As parents, we talk about our fear of what happens to their physical health but rarely talk about their mental health issues with our kids.

I am also here to be a voice for other people. As a former educator, I know many individuals in the school system love what they do and sacrifice a lot to be present for the students. However, many of them are afraid to speak up out of fear and repercussions that may happen due to speaking up. It is the school's job to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, science, and history. It is the parent's job to instill and lay a firm foundation for teaching our kids to be good human beings and ready for society. Our children's health and well-being are our responsibility. Health is a personal responsibility. No one can do that for you. If I take care of my health and my family's health, we are doing a favor for those crying out for people to be kind, compassionate, and look out for others. We are taking care of ourselves so that you are not at risk. With all due respect, you are a school board, not a medical board. You have no authority to determine or enforce any medical restrictions. We are told to listen to the experts, but it is crazy to think we are not being punked again with the constant flip-flopping and gas-lighting.

Tomi Carmean

Thank you for allowing me to talk to you. I am here for three reasons – Anthony, Madalyn, and Timothy. I am here to talk about my pro-choice regarding mask-wearing. All three of my children have learning

disabilities – ADHD - neurodevelopmental deficiency. My third child's ADHD is so severe that he is two years behind in reading. Do you know what it feels like for a third-grader not being able to read? When they wear masks, they don't feel well. Therefore, they don't think or learn well. I know what is best for my children. I want to talk about real statistics....0.00077% of being really ill....they throw out all of these statistics...by the way I would like to challenge there is no risk to wearing a mask. When you cannot get oxygen for eight hours (or however many hours) and you have a developmental issue, I say that is a risk. We should consider real science, not cherry-picking sites. There are real children who really need your help. Two years behind....do you know what that mentally does to my son? I battled Hilliard a year and a half ago, and I finally have the great support only to slap that diaper on his face where he can't breathe. He told me that he can't breathe in this thing. Timmy, I'm sorry, but you have to wear it. Learning is so important. This time in his life is critical. Finally, you are giving him the most wonderful support but please without a mask so that he can breathe and learn. I believe in making our decisions on wearing masks because I know what is best for my children. Please open your hearts and minds and do what is best for the children.

Lance Murdoch

I have been sitting in the classroom for the past year and haven't really cared about the mask. It was my freshman year, and I signed up for the vaccine as soon as I was eligible, thinking everything would go back to normal the next year. Three days after receiving the vaccine, I started feeling awful from the vaccine and ended up in the hospital for a week. The whole time I still thought at least I won't have to wear a mask anymore. We were on vacation about two weeks ago when my parents complained that the mask decision was coming back up even with being vaccinated. While in the hospital, they took blood a lot and performed several tests such as MRIs and CAT scans. It's not your job to take care of me. My parents and doctors did a wonderful job taking care of me. It's not your decision to make me wear a mask.

Robert Murdoch

I'm here to speak about the mask policy that will be in place for students during the coming school year. I am aware your masking policy was drafted before the latest scare, the Delta variant. I want to share facts and statistics that should inform any future decision on whether you make vaccinated students wear masks. There will never be zero COVID. So, the sooner everyone accepts that....COVID-19 is here today, so you should treat it as seasonal flu. The survivability rate for COVID-19 across all age groups is still very high, close to 99%. What we suspected last year is now an undeniable fact.

Children are not super-spreaders, have never been super-spreaders, and will not be super-spreaders in the future. According to the CDC website, approximately 416 children aged zero to nineteen died from COVID-19 during the past nineteen months. This may sound like a lot, but it is a ridiculously low number compared to the 56 million children and adolescents in the United States. In other words, the percentage of adolescents in the United States who died from COVID-19 is approximately 0.000743. Ask yourself how we have been living with COVID-19 for over a year, and there are yet to be any significant studies on the effects of making children wear masks in school. The Wall Street Journal recently wrote an in-depth article about children and noted that the simple question of whether masks reduce COVID transmission in children has only resulted in a single study of the issue and the results were inconclusive. The CDC has gone overboard in agreeing that all 56 million children and adolescents should wear masks regardless of vaccination status. I urge you not to fall prey to the latest panic surrounding the infections of the very weak Delta variant. Yes, cases are going up, but hospitalizations and death remain very low. It's high time we stop making our children feel the burdens of adult fears. Another year of mask-wearing will result in unknown harm to our children and is not sure to advance any educational purpose.

Sara Zantopulus

I have two children who attend Hoffman Trails and Hilliard Station. We have all been through so much during this pandemic. I have experienced stress as a parent of elementary-aged children and as a registered nurse and frontline health care worker. I encounter this virus on almost a daily basis. Although it's been very stressful, I was pleased with how Hilliard Schools handled COVID last school year. You listened to the medical professionals and did everything possible to protect our children, including mask mandates, social distancing, handwashing, and helping staff get vaccinated quickly. I, m.....to see that school districts are taking away simple, proven mitigation strategies that have helped keep kids safe and in school. I was appalled by the revised face mask policy presented at the last school board meeting. It seems our district has stopped following the guidance and recommendations of public health professionals. It has been proven that masks work. All of you told us that several times last year. You know that masks work better when everyone is wearing one. Many children in the district are not eligible to be vaccinated and are vulnerable to this virus. They depend on the behavior of everyone around them to protect them. How can they possibly learn if they don't feel safe? All health entities have recommended universal masking in schools. Children are currently getting COVID at higher levels than ever. It blows my mind that any school leader would believe that now is the time to stop these mitigation strategies. It cannot be the parent's choice. The honor system does not work. Families that choose not to mask are also likely to decide not to vaccinate. This dramatically increases the risk to my children and every child they encounter. If we start the school year without universal masking, you are likely to see major COVID outbreaks. This will risk taking kids out of school and going back to virtual learning. Kids need to be in school with their teachers and peers. When my daughter was sent home in 2020, she missed school and cried almost daily. She has never cried once or complained about wearing a mask. She wants to be at school. Please listen to the health experts, not politicians or people complaining because they believe conspiracy theories over science. Some parents are going to be upset, and you cannot please everyone. However, the worst-case scenario is children are hospitalized. Children will have life-long complications from COVID, and some children may die. I ask you which is worse – going to sleep at night knowing a child dies because you didn't do everything in your power to keep them safe. Why do we have to wait for something terrible to happen? Masks should be required until everyone is eligible to be vaccinated.

Stephen Kirtland

I have three kids in the Hilliard Schools. I want to ask you to make wearing a mask in schools and on schools grounds optional. I also want to thank you for not making a decision prior to this meeting. It gives me great optimism that you are seriously weighing the situation and want to make the best decision for our children. I have been watching the world with the mask mandates and lockdowns and have wondered about the long-term consequences of these actions. I can't see the future, and I'm not a scientist, but I am an involved father of three distinct individuals. During the mask mandate, my wife and I saw another couple outside a store carrying a small child. I smiled at the child, and at first, he looked at me strangely. Then it seemed a light switched on, and the child began to smile back. His eyes lit up.

Why is this important? That child was young enough that he had never seen another person smile at him outside of his immediate family. This is harmful to a child. This is how they learn to react to people. Wearing masks are stunting the emotional and psychological growth of our children. I am teaching my kids to be individuals and to think for themselves. When they are being told they have to conform, my wishes as a parent are being minimized. You are saying that I don't know what is best for my children when I have raised them from birth and know them better than they know themselves. Please make masks optional this school year. Please let parents make the choice that is best for their children. This

virus has a high survival rate, especially for children. So, don't tell me the masks are about health. They are not. Experts say that masks don't help and then turn around and say they do work.

Once you bend to tyranny, they will push for more. Masks are not about health; they are about control. When you control something, you have power over it. Once the power is attained, those who have it will use whatever means necessary to keep it. Abraham Lincoln said that anyone could stand adversity. If you want to test a person's character, give them power. Those that aim to destroy this country will start with our children. We cannot let this happen. All of us in this room cannot be agents of this country's demise. Let none of us bow to tyranny. Let us raise a generation of leaders, not followers.

Lee Wagner

I thank everyone for coming out. I have two children, ages sixteen and seventeen. I'm here to advocate for individual choice. I feel that if you are worried about COVID-19, you can have your child wear a mask. As a citizen of the United States, I also feel that I have the right to raise my children without masks. It's a personal choice. So I'm asking you (the school board) to allow parents to do what we do. You teach our children, keep them safe and let parents make their choices. I hope you make the right choice.

Susan Hovest

I appreciate your attention tonight. I have been listening to everyone with an open heart tonight, and clearly, we need to find some common ground. I'm guessing there are some people here tonight who have been told to "stay in their lane." There has never been a time in my life I have felt more in my lane than speaking here tonight on behalf of my children. It is my responsibility, privilege, and blessing to be my children's protector and advocate. You are elected officials to the school board. With all due respect, making decisions about wearing masks is a medical intervention. You are far off-center. I never anticipated sitting in a school board meeting, but here we are. I'm not here to argue for one side or the other, and I'm not here to present any data. I am here to pray for you for the courage and strength to make the right decision. I urge you to contemplate that where there is a risk, there should be a choice.

I'd like to start with a personal history. I know what it is like to test positive for the "c" word. I know what it is like to be very sick and fear death. In June of 2017, I was diagnosed with cancer. By August of that same year, I had had surgery and several rounds of chemotherapy. I had joined the group of being immune-compromised. You will not find a group more vulnerable or fragile than an entire facility full of chemo patients. This was frequently confirmed by lab tests showing that my counts were 0.0. The first time this happened, my doctor entered my exam room to tell me how terrible that situation was. I had no functioning immune system. Any germ could get into my body and create an infection that could lead to my death. My doctor did not wear a mask.

Japheth Luckey

I have a child going into the second grade this year. I find the different quarantine rules determined by whether individuals are wearing masks or not very interesting. The following is a quote from MSNBC from two weeks ago. Dr. Michael Osterholm is the Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. In November 2020, he was placed on Joe Biden's COVID board. "One of the things that we have found is a typical mask covering doesn't do much to reduce the amount of virus that we breathe in." These kids are together in the same room for hours. What's the basis for saying that a kid wearing a mask doesn't have to quarantine, but a kid who is not wearing a mask does have to quarantine? There is a lot of fear-mongering going on. We have to protect our kids. It should be pro-choice on masks. These masks are not protecting these kids. In Sweden last year, teachers and kids were

in school every day without masks. Teachers and staff had a lower infection rate than the general public. Let's do this together.

Bethani Knipfer

I am the mom of two children entering second and fourth grades and an aunt to two high school students. I currently work as a nurse practitioner at a local hospital, and I'm certified in.....I worked as a registered nurse for seven years prior to this. I provide you this information only to show that I was a healthcare worker prior to COVID-19 and throughout this pandemic. I have provided care for countless COVID-19 patients and have seen the acute and long-term effects of the virus in both healthy and chronically ill patients. In medicine, evidence-based practice is used. That is, I practice by following guidelines and the research done by experts. I want to share information, recommendations, and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Both the CDC and AAP encourage and acknowledge the importance of in-person learning for children. Vaccines are available for those aged twelve and over....While adults have the option to vaccinate, children under the age of twelve do not currently have that option. In our community, those who are not eligible for the vaccine.....With the emergence of the COVID-19 variant, we have.....Children may not get sick from COVID-19, but that does not change the fact that they can transmit the virus. Students will be in contact with teachers, classmates, parents, siblings, and grandparents who may be immune-compromised. There could be devastating consequences. Masks have shown they can prevent COVID-19 as well as other respiratory illnesses. From the Ohio Department of Health (ODH), flu cases during the 2021 season were very low. With the mask mandate being lifted in Ohio, the number of positive COVID cases has increased, and this is while students are on summer break. What will happen when school is back in session?

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. I understand that we are all COVID tired, but we need to continue to be vigilant to keep everyone in the community safe. I am asking that the school board follow the guidance of healthcare experts.

Ms. Whiting stated that there is time for one more speaker, and reminded everyone to be respectful – no laughing or jeering. Thank you.

Rachel Kaltenbach

I am the mother of a soon-to-be eighth-grader at Weaver and a third-grader at Norwich, and both are special needs students. Dr. Dan Stock recently addressed the Mt. Vernon School Board in Indiana over the futility of mask mandates and Covid-19 protocols in most schools. His speech is approximately six minutes long and can be found on YouTube. I recommend that you take time to watch it. I also want to draw your attention to one study he referenced from Stanford. The physical properties of medical and non-medical face masks suggest that face masks are ineffective against viral particles due to their difference in scale. According to the current knowledge, the virus SARS-CoV2 has a diameter of 60 nanometers to 140 nanometers, a billionth of a meter. While medical and non-medical face mask threads diameter ranges from about 55 micrometers to 440 micrometers; one-millionth of a meter (1,000 times larger than the virus). Due to the difference in size, the virus can easily pass through any face mask. In addition, the efficiency filtration rate of face masks is poor – ranging from 0.7% in non-surgical, cotton, gauze, woven face masks to 26% in cotton, sweater material. With respect to the surgical and N95 face masks, the efficiency filtration rate falls to 15% and 58%.

I get it. We want an easy fix, but masks are not it. Science shows that masks increase the rate of infection by constantly inhaling particles, bacteria, and toxins that we normally exhale through a mask. In addition,

masks lower the intake of critical oxygen, which reduces our immunity. Masks also create a constant level of stress which is harmful to our well-being.

Ms. Whiting thanked everyone for sharing their opinions. I appreciate everyone sharing their information in letters, emails, and by speaking here tonight.

Mrs. Long made a motion to extend the public participation to hear from everyone who submitted a request to speak. Mr. Lambert seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0. Ms. Whiting again asked that everyone be respectful of one another and the time limit for each speaker.

Cyndie Grant

I am a mother and a grandmother. Over a year ago, we hoped our doctors and researchers would develop a vaccine to allow our children to get back to school. We now have the opportunity for kids to return to the classroom with social distancing and face masks recommended by health experts. So soon as a vaccine will be approved for all ages, but until then, we need to protect our most prized possession, our children. I ask the district to follow the recommended guidance of our local health commissioners and experts. The Delta variant is affecting more children. We also need to prevent future, possibly more potent, new variants.

Lisa Chaffee

I do not envy you because half of the group here tonight will not be happy no matter what decision you make. So, we need a win-win situation. I believe that a win-win situation is pro-choice. This past year, my son, who just turned fifteen, was sick for the better part of three months. He was tested for COVID multiple times, strep, mono, and many other illnesses. Everything came back negative. His hearing was tested and showed that he had 80% hearing loss in his left ear, and we thought he would have surgery. One month after the school year ended, we went back to the audiologist, and his hearing was back to normal. The only solution they came to was prolonged mask-wearing made my child sick. When he was sick, he missed many days of school and was sleeping eighteen hours a day. Now granted, teenagers sleep a lot, but this was still abnormal for him. He couldn't eat and lost more than forty pounds. He didn't even want to play video games.

I worked in healthcare for over twenty years and have been doing a lot of research. I even spent three years in an infectious disease clinic. Even Dr. Fauci has said that only the N95 masks stop the virus. This is a highly politicized issue. Everyone in this room can find articles and statistic supporting their side of the story. As has been said many times, you are not a doctor. We are the parents and know what is best for our children. The best choice for everyone is for this mask thing to be optional. Let us and our kids have our freedom. Let's respect everyone's choice and not put scarlet letters on those who choose not to wear a mask.

Trish Barker

I am a veteran. How many others in the audience are also veterans? Stated something about all military members getting vaccines. The US military members and veterans are the most vaccinated people in the world. You cannot serve your country if you are fighting viruses. We are at war with a virus. It doesn't matter where it came from. What matters is winning this war. Doctors, researchers, and professionals have told us how to protect ourselves and others. Not everyone is able to protect themselves. Many are not eligible to be vaccinated. Therefore, we must do what we can to protect them. Those who are eligible should get the vaccine. In this war, every citizen has the responsibility to make sure we all win. In the

military, we call this looking out for each other's sixes. We need to use the tools and information available to protect our community. Every case is defined as the process of gaining knowledge. We need to listen to those who have spent their life being educated about public health to ensure we have educated children. Are we teaching the value of education by ignoring the recommendations of educated experts? It's time to come together for the public good. Listen to the experts and do what you can to stop this virus.

Licia Sapp

Thank you for allowing everyone to speak. I am the parent of a soon-to-be third-grader.....regardless of vaccination status.....that needs to get shots.....as you know anyone under twelve is not eligible....recent peer reviews indicate children can have long-term cognitive, neurological and emotional effects....as stated earlier....follow American Academy of Pediatrics.....until all school-aged children are eligible to be vaccinated. The AAP recommends universal masking..... Additionally, the CDC and the Ohio Department of Health recommend masks in school regardless of vaccination status. There is data on the Delta variant that fully vaccinated people can transmit to unvaccinated people. Being home was the saddest thing for my child. No complaints about wearing masks because she wants to be in school.....

Rebecca Jacobs

I am a mom, a consultant, a former attorney, and I teach at Ohio State. I also do a lot of public speaking, but I'm really nervous right now. I want to thank everyone for coming out and giving their opinions. Isn't this one of the great things about America? The Centers for Disease Control is concerned with one thing, disease control. School boards are concerned with the health and welfare of our students and so much more. We have to think about social, emotional, intellectual, developmental, and psychological health. It looks like Dublin and Southwestern City school districts have decided to make masks optional.

I have two daughters, eleven and nine, who are both very emotional girls. It was a rough year in terms of masks. It is rough when children cannot fully understand each other or see facial expressions. It is hard to instruct. As I mentioned, I teach at Ohio State, and they give us the option of doing remote or in-person. I want to be in person because we learn so much more, but it is hard for me to communicate with my students when wearing masks. Many of my graduate students do not have English as their first language making it very difficult to communicate through masks. We found ourselves not engaging in conversations because it took too much effort. Considering all the facts and everything else that people have said, I believe that masking should be a parent's choice. If someone believes masks work, then they should have the right to have their children wear one. I sent my kids to camps without masks pretty much this whole summer.

Ana M. Casado

Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening. I prepared a statement, but I don't want to read it because you have heard all the facts and statistics. I have a six-year-old son who is starting kindergarten. He cannot make a choice for himself about whether or not he gets COVID. While masks may have a weave that allows COVID particles to come in, they do not allow COVID particles to come out. So, everyone should wear masks. In my prepared statement, I said that I am not here to talk to other parents. I'm here to speak to the school board. But these parents here tonight have incensed me because they don't care about my child.

My children are healthy and will likely survive COVID. What if my mother doesn't? Now we have a new variant on the heels of Delta; what will this variant do? What will I do if I can't send my child to a school that cares about him? The school staff, board members, and professionals all act in every child's best

interest in the absence of a parent. What is my child's best interest? Yes, I have seen his mental health decline because he couldn't play with friends. It is horrible. We all want our kids in school. If we're going to maintain in-person status, we have to wear masks. I hope you decide in my child's best interest for his health and safety.

Ms. Whiting again asked that everyone be respectful of one another and the time limit for each speaker. If I hear any further laughter or jeering, then we will end public participation.

Casey Webb

I am a registered nurse and the mother of four children. We have been residents for many years and have always been impressed with this community and school district. I believe whether or not to wear a mask should be made by parents, not the school district. There are many reasons why I will not be sending my kids in masks. Clinical evidence has shown that cloth masks have no effect against the transmission of viral pathogens and do not limit the threat of COVID. A recent study shows that cloth masks...COVID is a respiratory virus spread by small particles that go through any mask, even the N95 masks. Kids have a 99.99% survival rate against COVID.

Some may ask about staff. They have the choice to be vaccinated or wear a mask. It is their choice. It should be a parent's choice as to whether our children wear a mask or not. Masks inhibit our children's social development and their ability to play and learn. Some might say that kids are resilient, but are they?

It is not ethical to continue this path of wearing masks when there is no scientific justification. I hope you make the right decision and do what is best for the children.

Amy Ciminello

My third-grader and kindergarten cannot get vaccinated.....takes a community working together to stay healthy...until the vaccine is available to children, we need masks....we can wear masks now and play it safe....right now, young children do have the choice to receive a vaccine....you are responsible for my child's safety....I'm trusting you with my child, which includes following the recommendations of the CDC....whatever decision you make, I want to know why. I ask for transparency in your why. Are we following emotion or science?

Jessica McCormick

I have an auto-immune disease, so the COVID vaccine is a concern, and I believe in choice. My biggest concern is that our children's mental and emotional health is being harmed by not being able to see their teacher's and friends' faces. Children learn social and language skills through nonverbal communication. With our faces covered by masks, they are learning to fear and dehumanize the people with whom they should feel safe. Being able to see faces and mouths is imperative to children's speech development. Children are very sensitive to subtle facial expressions when deciding to trust and cooperate. I have two teenagers in high school who are being influenced by their peers. If their peers are wearing masks, they think they should be wearing a mask. They don't understand it's their choice. I heard someone mention their child was suicidal. That's a concern too.

Another concern is that your mask policy may change throughout the school year, and I do not want this to happen. I don't think that masks offer any protection and should not be required.

Brent Billet

I am here representing my five and seven-year-old. They do not want to wear a mask next year. I was concerned that the silent majority wouldn't talk, but it looks like they showed up tonight. Working out and eating well is recommended, but are we forced to work out or eat well? No. Then, why are we forcing kids to wear masks? The recommendation by the health board is not the rule of law. Don't force our kids to wear a mask. It is just wrong on all levels.

Larry Mezquita

I have three children in the school district, grades eight, fifth, and fourth. I appreciate you giving us all the time to speak tonight. I am very glad for everyone who has shown up for this discussion. This shows me that we are not the monsters on Twitter or Facebook. We are kind and respectful individuals. I hope that no matter your decision, we continue to be the kind and respectful individuals we are today. I think it is clear that since I'm not wearing a mask that I'm going to ask you to give everyone a choice. I am vaccinated and feel that everyone eligible should get vaccinated. I feel that wearing a mask is a parental decision. My children have been attending camps in the school buildings this summer in large groups, and no one has been wearing a mask. I think this is pretty telling. In regards to quarantine, the idea that kids wear masks properly is not reality (I work in a school).

Erin Reilly-Sanders

Just like everyone in this room, I am here because I care about my child and our community. The experts agree that, at minimum, wearing a mask helps keep our children safe. I'm sorry this burden is on you, that your options are limited, and the community is critiquing you. Thank you for taking on this burden. Please continue to follow the advice of health experts.

Lisa Murray

I'm the mother of two elementary students. They are at a school with more than six hundred students who are not yet eligible for the vaccine. So until they are eligible, I'm here to ask for universal masking in schools. I deeply value the education my boys have received at Hilliard City Schools. We teach our children the value of science and the process of research. I ask you to do the same and listen to the recommendations of the health experts, specifically the CDC and AAP. I would like to end with a quote from AAP. "The American Academy of Pediatrics continues to recommend that all staff and students, who are two years or older, wear face masks unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit their use. Universal masking serves multiple roles."

E CONSENT AGENDA

The Board of Education approved item E1 through E2, consisting of certified and classified personnel matters. You can find the complete list of personnel matters as an attachment to the *Minutes*.

Approve the following student trip requests:

- a. Bradley Cross Country, Bellefontaine, OH – August 9, 2021
- b. Davidson Girls Cross Country, East Lansing, MI – September 16, 2021
- c. Davidson Boys Cross Country, St. Matthews, KY – September 17, 2021
- d. Davidson Boys Cross Country, East Lansing, MI – September 16, 2021
- e. Davidson Boys Cross Country, Rochester, NY – October 1, 2021
- f. Davidson Boys Cross Country, Portage, MI – October 9, 2021

F ACTION AGENDA

F1 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Education of the Hilliard City School District, Franklin County, Ohio, that to provide for current expenses and other expenditures of said Board of Education, during the fiscal year, ending June 30, 2022, the following sums be amended and the same are hereby set aside and appropriated for the several purposes for which expenditures are to be made and during said fiscal year as follows:

019 - OTHER GRANT	\$105,355
499 - MISC STATE GRANT	\$41,000
516 - TITLE VI-B IDEA	\$4,819,750
536 - TITLE I SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	\$95,000
584 - TITLE IV-A	\$141,700
599 - MISC FEDERAL GRANT	\$0

Mr. Lambert asked if this is the result of additional funding from the state and federal governments. Mr. Wilson responded that a little more money came in the MISC Federal Grant, which has been moved into the 584 funds.

F2 The Board of Education adopted the following policies:

- a) DH – Bonded Employees and Officers
- b) EDE – Computer/Online Services
- c) EDE-R – Computer/Online Services (Acceptable Use and Internet Safety)
- d) EDE-E – Network Acceptable Use Staff/Volunteer Agreement (**Rescind**)
- e) EF/EFB – Food Services Management/Free and Reduced-Price Food Services
- f) IGCK – Blended Learning (**New**)
- g) IGE – Adult Education Programs
- h) IGED – Adult Diploma
- i) IGED-R – Diploma of Adult Education (**Rescind**)

Ms. Whiting thanked the policy committee for all of their work.

F3 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Hilliard City Schools Board of Education wishes to authorize the Director of Business to advertise, receive bids, and purchase ten (10) 78-passenger conventional school bus chassis and bodies and two (2) 65-passenger conventional handicap school bus chassis and bodies.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Hilliard City Schools Board of Education wishes to participate and authorize the META Solutions (META) to advertise and receive bids on said Board’s behalf as per the specifications submitted for the cooperative purchase of ten (10) 78-passenger conventional school bus chassis and bodies two (2) 65-passenger conventional handicap school bus chassis and bodies.

Mr. Lambert explained that this is part of our routine fleet management process, where we replace about ten of our oldest buses each year. While we keep each bus for approximately ten years, the average age of our fleet is five years.

F4 The Board of Education approved the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Hilliard City School District Board of Education adopted prior resolutions announcing its safety protocols for the 2020-2021 school year (the “Responsible Restart” and “Returning Together Plan” resolutions) that expired at the end of that school year;

WHEREAS, the Board remains committed to maintaining safety protocols and considering the guidance from federal, state, and local health experts as it relates to COVID-19 and the safety of students in school in order to provide its students with a safe face-to-face classroom learning experience for the 2021-2022 school year;

WHEREAS, the Board has requested that the Superintendent continue to provide an update on COVID-19 conditions within the local community and Hilliard City Schools at each Board of Education meeting to allow for the most current safety considerations;

WHEREAS, the CDC has recommended universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, but has only ordered that passengers and drivers must wear a mask while on school buses, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in its January 29, 2021 Order;

WHEREAS, the Ohio Department of Health strongly recommends that those who are unvaccinated wear masks while in school, but has not ordered masks to be worn in Ohio public schools;

WHEREAS, Ohio Revised Code Section 3313.67 authorizes boards of education to make and enforce such rules to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the students attending or eligible to attend the schools of the district, as in its opinion the safety and interest of the public require;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board will require passengers and drivers on all school transportation to wear masks when required by laws, health orders, or regulations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent is authorized to adopt procedures to implement this resolution, directed to monitor current guidance, recommendations and requirements from public health authorities, and requested to make recommendations to adjust district-wide mask requirements as necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Superintendent is authorized in his own judgment to require masks on a district, building-wide, grade-level, or classroom basis to allow a quick response within the District when circumstances so require.

- I. Any district wide changes in the student learning mode or related timelines will be made based upon review of the following data:
 - A. Proportion of COVID-19 cases of school-aged children in the Hilliard City School District;
 - B. COVID-19 Analytics and Targeted Surveillance (CATS) data in three areas:
 1. Percent of student absences

2. Percent of staff absences
 3. Rate of nurse visits of CLI/ILI per 1,000 students
- C. Positivity Rates and Case Counts in Hilliard City School District Community;
- D. Other data as deemed relevant by federal, state, and local medical experts.
- II. The Superintendent is expected to communicate any changes to the student learning mode at the building or district level relative to masking within 24 hours of making said change.
 - III. The Superintendent may require the use of masks by all persons entering a particular building/set of buildings if staffing issues arise, or the Franklin County Public Health Commissioner or Ohio Department of Health direct such a move, or if a localized outbreak occurs as determined by internal data and the coronavirus task force.
 - IV. If the conditions which necessitated a transition to a mask requirement are no longer present, the Superintendent shall have the authority to remove masking requirements.
 - V. If a mask requirement shall be put into effect for any building, masks shall also be required on transportation to and from the affected building.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that board policy EBEA shall be suspended indefinitely, effective immediately, pending further action by the Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall remain in effect through the final day of the 2021-2022 school year or until otherwise modified by the Board.

Ms. Whiting thanked everyone who wrote letters and those who shared their opinions this evening. I can say that each of us has read all of the letters and emails. I have been contemplating this issue for many days and hours. First and foremost, the school board is a nonpartisan position. Unfortunately, this is a medical and public health issue that has become a very politicized issue, in my opinion. This has caused much confusion, anger, and divisiveness throughout our community, city, state, and nation; we need to work together to fight this global pandemic. This pandemic has taken so many lives, hospitalized so many others, caused many lasting effects for many others, and now has mutated into another variant that is more dangerous to those who are unvaccinated. Children under the age of twelve simply have no choice to become vaccinated or not. This is very worrisome to many experts in the area and me. Experts in infectious diseases, intensive care, pediatrics, geriatrics, and other specialties recognize that now is the time to protect ourselves. This continues to be a pandemic, and we know that vaccines save lives. We also know that masks provide good protection against the spread of this virus for those who are not vaccinated. As I have done many times throughout my tenure on this Board, I look at all sides and the facts of an issue before making what I believe to be the best recommendation or decision. I have read recommendations from the CDC, AAP, Columbus Public Health, and Franklin County Public Health and appreciate their efforts to make recommendations.

The Delta variant is affecting children nationwide and is making unvaccinated adults and children more ill. It is believed that the Delta variant may be carried by someone who is in contact with a positive patient to someone at their home. I have recently heard that 99.9% of all hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 are people who had not been vaccinated. While not all of these are children, a community member

shared that eight children in Florida have died from COVID-19. Another person said that seven children in Ohio have died from COVID-19. That's fifteen children who are someone's family, school members, and community members, and I don't want to take that risk with our children. I don't want to lose any students in Hilliard City Schools to COVID-19.

The resolution we are voting on tonight gives our superintendent the authority to make the best decision regarding masking-wearing in our schools. I have already shared with Mr. Stewart that I believe the safety of our youngest students who cannot be vaccinated is crucial. Therefore, I fully support a mask mandate for all PreK-6 grade students regardless of vaccination status. I also strongly recommend that masks be worn in all other grades and buildings throughout the district. I understand there are concerns about mental health, and we are working with our psychologists and health care professionals to identify at-risk students. If your student is at-risk, I urge you to speak to your teacher, your building principal or send me an email message at lisa_whiting@hboe.org. I promise we will follow up to get your child some help.

Mrs. Long asked if the district will have masks available for students like we did last school year. Mr. Stewart answered that we have approximately 75,000 masks that can be given to anyone who needs a mask. He also shared that masks will be available on school buses due to the federal mandate that all bus drivers and passengers wear masks.

Mrs. Long also asked how often will the community be updated on what is happening in the schools regarding the determination of mask-wearing. Mr. Stewart responded that this resolution requires him to update the board at every board meeting. As required, we will also continue to provide the dashboard data.

Mr. Perry added that the resolution states the superintendent is expected to communicate any changes to the student learning mode at the building or district level relative to masking within 24 hours of making said change.

Mr. Perry commented that he is proud of this resolution and all of the work done by the team. It allows the superintendent to make decisions at the district, building, and classroom levels. This allows the superintendent to mandate masks only in areas that show (by data) that they are needed. Mr. Perry has complete faith in Mr. Stewart making decisions in line with all of the relevant data. If masks are being mandated, it is because specific reasons have been identified. We have to adapt and adjust. Mr. Perry supports the resolution.

Mr. Lambert read the following prepared statement: "I make my decisions about our instructional mode and safety protocols based on my understanding of the science of communicable viral disease and evolution. This is what I understand:

It's a numbers game. The more people who are infected, the more people who will get infected. The more people who get infected, the more people who will become sick enough to require hospitalization, and the more people who will die.

Also, the more people who are infected, the greater are the chances of the virus mutating in those infected people and then having those variants spread. The vaccines we have available now stimulate our immune system to produce antibodies that recognize and destroy the variants that were prevalent a year ago when those vaccines were formulated.

When there are a great number of people who don't get vaccinated, then they collectively serve as a rich environment for viral mutation, even if many of those infected individuals don't themselves get sick. In that unvaccinated environment, a variant will likely evolve that is resistant to the antibodies produced by the current vaccine.

And then we'll start all over again.

It will be as though no one was vaccinated, and we'll return to high rates of infection, illness, and death. No one wants that to happen.

That's my understanding of the science.

On that basis of understanding, I propose that for grades 7 and up, we recommend that students wear masks while indoors - especially unvaccinated students - but not require it because the parents of those students have the choice whether or not to get their kids vaccinated.

But for grade 6 and younger, I recommend that masks be required for students, teachers, staff, and anyone entering those buildings because it is, I believe, immoral to require those children to come to school while still unvaccinated and then not reasonably protect them from the transmission of the virus. Once the younger kids can be vaccinated - which may be soon - we can go to mask option for all."

F5 The Board of Education approved the 2021-2022 bus routes as presented.

G REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM

G1 Committee Reports

Mrs. Long asked if PTO groups, including ISPTO, are permitted to start meeting in the school buildings again. Mr. Stewart responded that we have opened our buildings for community use. Therefore, PTO groups need to submit a building use request.

G2 Superintendent's Update

a) Policy discussion on passing out campaign literature

Policy KJA - Distribution/Advertisement/Promotion of Any Kind of Non-School-Sponsored Literature
7. Literature that promotes or opposes any political figure, candidate or issue, including ballot issues of any kind, shall not be approved for distribution/advertisement/ promotion. Exceptions may be granted by the Board for issues that directly affect Hilliard City Schools including, but not limited to, District levies and bond issues. These exceptions must have Board resolution.

Mr. Lambert asks that the policy review committee consider letting candidates put campaign signs on school property (outside the polling place requirements) on election day.

Mrs. Long requests the policy review committee consider including literature for school board candidates as an exception in the above policy statement. Two years ago, the board permitted board member candidates to pass out campaign literature at "Hilliard versus Hilliard" football games.

b) Convocation will be held virtually again this year and is scheduled for Monday at 8:00 a.m.

H EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT

H1 The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.