



Johannesburg-Lewiston Area Schools

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August 28, 2021

Dear JLAS staff and families,

At 6:12pm last night, I received an order from the Health Department that requires the district to implement a mask mandate for all people in our buildings effective immediately.

After conferring with legal counsel and the Board, we do not have a choice in implementation of this mandate. If we do not implement the mandate and require all in the buildings to wear masks – except while eating and a few other specific situations- the district can lose funding, be fined, and will be open to other consequences that will result in the loss of the best we can do for our students.

I anticipate that this will be much like last year, our dedicated and empathetic staff will take students outside, they will offer breaks, and we will do all we can to ensure our students are getting the best face to face learning possible.

The order does not have a timeline on it, it does state that they will remove the order with increased vaccination rates, lower numbers of cases, and increased hospitalization accessibility. It is my hope that we will see this order removed in the near future provided we can get the items above to happen.

The order covers Emmett, Antrim, Charlevoix, and Otsego County schools. All schools in those counties have this mandate. As our district falls within Montmorency County as well, we checked and the order will apply to our entire district. So, everyone in all of our buildings will need to wear masks when they return to school.

I am personally very sorry for the late notice. I had expected the decision our Board made to make masks optional was where we would be to start the school year. However, if you'd like to take the time to read the order, the local health department clearly feels wearing masks is a necessity for vaccinated and unvaccinated people at this time. I know many of you have personal feelings on this hot issue. Let's remember, we are all doing the best we can with what we know right now. Support each other and let's help our students start the year positively. Whether you support the new order or you disagree, please send your child to school with a mask to wear so the school can focus on welcoming students back to school and educating them.

Any questions regarding the order itself should be directed to the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at 231-547-6523. A copy of the order can be found at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1olFNbb1fmehYNpxhrbUUx4pEU_MK4Ne/view?usp=sharing

Sincerely,

Katy

Katy Xenakis-Makowski