
Dr. Dwight Bonk
Superintendent of Schools

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June 9, 2021

Assemblymember Carl E. Heastie
LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Assemblymember Heastie and Senator Stewart-Cousins,

Many school districts, including Wappingers, received a document indicating the position from the NYS Department of Health and the Governor's Office that would make the usage of masks optional in schools effective Monday, June 7, 2021.

Based on this information, the Wappingers CSD sent out notification indicating such for Monday, June 7, 2021. Shortly after 2:00pm on Sunday, June 6, 2021, we received documentation from NYSED indicating that districts are to follow the original guidance on wearing masks that was in place prior to the Friday memo. Needless to say, this created a considerable amount of confusion and consternation for students, parents, and staff within our District.

The Wappingers Central School District is the 9th largest school district in NYS with well over 10,000 students who attend school in 15 different buildings. Many of the buildings were built prior to 1968 and do not have air conditioning in classrooms, common areas, gymnasiums, or cafeterias. The requirement to wear a mask has contributed to health issues for those students and staff who have respiratory issues, asthmatic conditions, and other heat sensitivity ailments. We have had cases where this has occurred, impacting both students and staff, over the past couple of weeks. In the interest of the health and safety of our staff and students and the requirement to continue to wear masks, the District felt it was necessary to call a remote learning day on Monday, June 7, 2021 as the heat index was forecast to be close to 100 degrees. I am hopeful that the NYS Department of Health understands the gravity of this decision as our district is in Dutchess County and our COVID positivity rates are extremely low.

Moving forward, we would ask that the decisions regarding mask usage be left up to the local communities in consultation with their county health department. This will enable local communities to develop proper standards for mask usage to ensure the health and safety of students

and staff are not compromised any further because of the hot and humid conditions that typically occur in the month of June.

We request your action to overturn Executive Order 202.6 to allow these important public health decisions to be made at the local level as was the standard procedure prior to the pandemic. This was also necessary in the absence of any updated guidelines from the NYS Department of Health for over eight months during the pandemic as the conditions in local communities were much different and required locally made decisions.

Thank you very much for taking the time to review this correspondence.



Dr. Dwight Bonk
Superintendent of Schools WCSD



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