



Dear Families,

As a follow-up to my email last Friday detailing the Return-to-School Safe Learning Plan, I wanted to share that new and evolving information regarding the Delta variant of COVID has come to light which reinforces our decision to put strong safety measures in place for the start of the school year.

While we have heard from many families that they are pleased with the protocols we have put into place, we have also had some questions from parents about whether our protocols are too strict.

As I share the information with you below, I hope you will agree that our protocols, including masks for those in grades K-8 (as students in our elementary schools and at least one grade level in our middle schools are not eligible for vaccination against COVID) make very good sense.

One of our district parents, who is a physician, shared information that the head of vaccines at Mayo Clinic provided to doctors recently which helps to articulate the need for strong safety measures. It also provides a more accurate, and unfortunately because of that, a more alarming picture of what is happening with the Delta variant than I previously shared. I want to thank the parent for providing this information.

In the information shared by this parent, the head of vaccines for the Mayo Clinic outlines the fast transmission rate of the Delta variant, compared to the original COVID strand, particularly among children. He shares that children are getting sicker faster and with more complications than from the original variant, with more than 100,000 children sick and 4,000 hospitalized currently in the U.S. He says the rate of hospitalization of children has climbed 27% in one week and that it is continuing to climb. He also shares that there are additional variants emerging and that at least one of them may be even more deadly than the Delta variant.

Emerging data from other medical experts and hospital administrators across the country, which you can easily find in all manner of news reports, also suggests that a much higher percentage of children are being affected by the Delta variant of COVID than by the original strand of COVID and that there has been an increase in hospitalizations of children with the Delta variant.

Additionally, experts are sharing that while there is demonstrated resistance to COVID for some who have already had the virus, there is a substantially increased resistance to COVID for those who have been vaccinated.

I am not merely sharing all of this to clarify why we have masking protocols in place in our elementary and middle schools and why we are putting all of the other safety measures in place but to remind us all that there is much we still have to learn about this virus and the variants that will follow ... and that data is changing daily. Please know that we will not minimize the seriousness of COVID or of any variant of it.

I encourage us all to stay informed about the virus and how it's evolving, and I encourage you to speak with a health care provider if you have questions about any necessary safety precautions for your family.

Our school district is taking COVID very seriously, and the safety of our students and staff remains our highest priority.

For reference, here are the details about the District's [Return-to-School Safe Learning Plan](#).

Thank you.

Dennis Peterson
Superintendent of Schools