

February 6, 2022

Dear Chadwick-Milledgeville CUSD #399 Stakeholders & Families,

During the pandemic, the District has endeavored to keep our students, parents, teachers, and members of the Community healthy and safe. We have also sought to follow the rule of law and those obligations imposed on the District by the Governor, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

The District is aware that on Friday, February 3, 2022, a Judge in Sangamon County issued a decision holding that the mask mandate and exclusion rules imposed on school districts by the Governor are void and unlawful. The Governor and IDPH have vowed to appeal this decision. The status of any such appeal is presently unknown, as of the time this letter is being sent. Nonetheless, based on the clarity of the Sangamon County Judge, unless modified by the Appellate Court, we believe that our District is not currently able to enforce the masking and exclusion requirements. The Court's Order appears clear that the rules are considered void and invalid. We understand that the Appellate Court will consider this matter on an expedited timeline, with the currently expected deadline of February 17th. The Appellate Court may also issue a "stay" or hold of the decision while the case is being considered. If a stay is issued, the mitigation requirements including masks, quarantine, and testing will immediately be reinstated.

At this time we still continue to **encourage and recommend that masks be worn**. While the Governor's rules will not be actively enforced this practice remains the recommendation of the CDC, IDPH, and the Carroll County Health Department. We will not be testing our staff weekly or asking for vaccination status. Until the further decision of the Courts, the District will not exclude students or employees identified as "close contacts" to a positive COVID-19 case who are asymptomatic. Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 will remain excluded from school for the time periods set forth in the IDPH's Exclusion Protocol. If you have symptoms and will not voluntarily test, you will still be out for 5 days or until released to return to school by a medical provider.

School will resume on Monday. We expect our students to arrive at school and remain respectful and compassionate towards each other. We expect teachers, staff, and parents to treat one another with respect and compassion. No matter how each of you feels about the recent court decision we remain in this all together and are stronger when respectful of each other.

At this time, masks will still be required on all District transportation due to the continued TSA mandate requiring face coverings on public transportation. This is a federal law and even with the new decision, this has not changed. Everyone that is on the bus must wear a mask.

At athletic events held in our District, we are also going to take the stance of mask optional until the further ruling of the Court, in essence not actively enforcing the Governor's imposed rules. We will always offer masks at the front door, however, this will no longer be a requirement. Please understand that at other facilities, they still may have masking requirements and you should be respectful of their rules as they apply them. As stated earlier, this could also change as the Court process continues.

Our District remains committed to the safety and welfare of students, teachers, and staff. As we have always asked, even prior to COVID 19, if your child is sick, please keep them home. Our two main goals every day are to educate our students as well as keep our students, teachers, staff, and everyone that walks into our building as safe as possible. All of these steps are designed to help keep our community safe. Our school will still offer voluntary Binax testing and Shield Testing. If you have a concern and would like your child tested, we will continue to offer that opportunity.

Lastly, it is entirely possible that District imposed masking may be instituted in the event of an outbreak or based on negative school-based data in the future. This was a part of the mitigation strategy of the district proposed and shared with the community prior to the Governor's executive order. Any such approach would be narrowly tailored to address the specific circumstances.

Thank you for your support during this unprecedented time. We will continue to keep you informed as new or updated information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Timothy J. Schurman