



Orange Township Public Schools

Gerald Fitzhugh, II, Ed.D.
Office of the Superintendent



March 4, 2022

Greetings Orange Township Public School District Staff, Families, and Caregivers,

As you may be aware, Governor Murphy recently shared that the Universal School Mask Mandate is set to end on March 7, 2022 in the State of New Jersey for students, staff, and visitors. However, school districts have been given the autonomy to continue with the current mask mandate, limit mask usage, or end mask usage altogether. As we recognize that all voices are important, the district developed a survey to capture stakeholder input. The survey opened on Thursday, February 17, 2022, and closed on Tuesday, February 22, 2022.

Over the winter break, the district worked closely with the local health department. Why is this important? In order to make an informed decision, we wanted to hear from you and local health officials regarding Orange's current challenges associated with COVID-19.

Below are the survey results for your purview. I want to personally thank our staff and families for taking this survey as we continue to ensure the health and safety of all who enter our doors.

The Stakeholder Survey Results

We received a total of 1,236 responses from parents and staff members. The breakdown was as follows:

- 561 Staff members
- 675 Families

Be advised that 885 respondents (both families and staff members) shared that the mask mandate should **NOT** be lifted, whereas 351 respondents (both families and staff members) shared that it should be lifted.

We also asked another question about the mask mandate continuing regardless of vaccination status. 869 respondents shared that the mask mandate should NOT be lifted irrespective of vaccination status, whereas 367 respondents shared that it should be lifted regardless of vaccination status.

Based on the feedback from our health department and the stakeholder survey, masks will continue to be worn within all Orange Public Schools buildings; this includes offices and classrooms until further notice. We have taken stock of the importance of mask breaks and will ensure that this is happening across the district. We hope with the seasonal change that the rates in Orange Township will continue to decline, allowing us to reevaluate our preventative measures in place. In addition to wearing masks, students and staff will be given daily temperature checks upon entering buildings and are still required to complete the COVID-19 questionnaire.

As we did with the reopening of schools last year, we will adjust all current practices on a staggered basis.

Staggered Approach to Returning to Normal

Temperature check readings: the Week of March 14th, these will no longer be required.

COVID-19 Daily Questionnaires: the Week of March 28th these forms will no longer be required.

Removal of Desk Shields: Week of April 4th will no longer be required

Removal of Mandatory Masks: To be further evaluated post Spring Break 2022. You will be notified following the week of April 25, 2022, in writing.

The district asks that you continue to send in vaccination cards so our school nurses have the most up to date information. Further, if you are sick, as shared previously, stay home until the symptoms pass. We want to ensure that everyone that enters our doors are safe. COVID-19 Testing will continue weekly until the end of March. Any changes will be communicated in a timely fashion.

Throughout the course of this year, the reopeningofschools@orange.k12.nj.us email has remained intact in order to answer questions that you may have during this unique experience. While email responses are often returned within hours of receipt, please allow 24-48 hours for an email response. The district wants you to hear from us with any and all questions that you have. It is very important to keeping staff and families informed, particularly during these times.

We are certainly in this together. I am confident that we will continue to blaze a trail filled with success and accomplishment throughout this school year and beyond.

Educationally yours,

Gerald Fitzhugh, II, Ed.D.

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Superintendent of Schools