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E.T. Hamilton School
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Osage School
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Voorhees Middle School

February 21, 2022

Dear Voorhees Community,

First and foremost, I would like to thank the entire Voorhees community for your patience and understanding during the current 2021–2022 school year. We have continued to navigate many challenges as we journey back to normalcy.

Recently, Governor Murphy announced that effective March 7, 2022, the statewide mask mandate in schools and childcare settings will end. The Voorhees Township School District has consistently followed the executive orders of our governor. Although school districts are still awaiting guidance from the NJ Department of Health regarding any possible changes in the recommendations for close contacts and quarantine/isolation periods, we feel it is essential to inform you of our anticipated procedures that will go into effect next month. We will communicate any additional changes by the NJDOH as soon as they become available. As a district we will continue to follow the guidance of the New Jersey Department of Health.

- Staff vaccination rate of approximately 95%
- Daily positive cases for district students and staff have decreased by over 90%
- On Thursday, February 17, 2022, New Jersey was downgraded to level 'yellow' or moderate risk
- Data indicates that the spread of COVID has steadily declined in New Jersey since its peak in January 2022
- Over the past year, the Voorhees Township School District has offered approximately ten different vaccination clinics for students and staff

Therefore, starting on Monday, March 7, 2022, masking in all Voorhees Township Public Schools will become optional. We will also eliminate the morning temperature checks for all students and staff. This procedure was implemented in September 2020 and has identified no positive COVID cases.

Mask-wearing will be a personal choice starting **on March 7, 2022**. Students and staff should exercise this choice based on their comfort and parental guidance. As a diverse, compassionate community, bullying and intimidation over the wearing or not wearing a face covering will not be tolerated. We ask that all families have an open conversation with their child(ren) on this topic. I am asking all families to join me as we help promote the best interests of all our students.

Please be advised that the Voorhees Township School District reserves the right to reimpose mandatory mask-wearing should we experience a sudden increase in positive cases or a schoolwide outbreak. If the governor reimposes an executive order requiring masks in public schools, Voorhees Township Public Schools will follow that mandate.

The Voorhees Township School District will continue to provide and encourage the following COVID mitigation procedures:

- Social distancing whenever possible
- Student desks spread apart facing one direction
- Increase outdoor airflow whenever possible
- UV lighting utilized each evening
- Sanitizing ionization units in all HVAC units
- Handwashing stations
- Outdoor classrooms used when possible
- “Remote Choice” is not an option per New Jersey Department of Education

We will temporarily continue using desk shields in all elementary cafeterias. Portable shields will continue to be made available to VMS students. We hope to continue to see a decline in positive cases, and all cafeteria shields will be eliminated **on Monday, April 26, 2022**. Removing these shields will allow us to use these spaces for our traditional spring/end-of-year activities.

Students may be provided and asked to wear a mask upon entering the nurse's office. A mask will be provided case-by-case based on the purpose of the visit. Our after school athletic teams visiting other school locations will be required to follow the guidelines of the home district.

Current federal regulations require students to be masked when riding school buses. School buses are subject to federal masking regulations. School districts are not permitted to override or ignore this regulation. We will inform our families if this regulation is changed or updated.

We continue to encourage families to keep their children home when sick, displaying signs of COVID, waiting on test results, or having tested positive. Keeping our schools safe can only happen if we work together.

Respectfully,

Michael Redfearn
Acting Superintendent