



JACKSON SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Jackson, NJ 08527

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Nicole Pormilli, Superintendent of Schools

June 4, 2021

Honorable Governor Phil Murphy
255 West State Street
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

From the onset of the Pandemic, the Jackson School District has committed itself to successfully applying the guidance from your office and the New Jersey Departments of Education and Health. We are proud of our efforts to prevent and respond to positive COVID-19 cases and to address the academic and social emotional needs of our 1,400 staff members and the 7,700 students we serve in our K-12 district.

Like you, we are eager to embrace safe ways to continue to transition out of this crisis. **We believe making masks optional for students and staff is a key part of that safe transition into the new school year in September.** We are concerned about the long lasting social emotional effects of wearing a mask in school for a full day. We respectfully request that you please give strong consideration to our position, as it is born out of first-hand experience here on the front lines in our schools.

We offered in-person instruction to our students from the very first day of school, increased in-person learning as conditions allowed, and are ending the year offering 5-day, in-person instruction for all students, all while ensuring our Full Remote students were supported. We worked with area providers and advocates to offer multiple vaccination opportunities and at this point, any staff member who wished to be vaccinated has had ample chances to do so.

With every decision and progression, we considered data from state and county health officials, and the statewide perspective supplied through the New Jersey COVID-19 Risk Matrix. We are committed to applying the same analysis and logic to future district-based decisions and can certify that if allowed to do so, each data-driven local decision would be made with the utmost care and concern for our school community, our township, and our fellow New Jersey residents.

We know there is still much work to be done to continue to protect our community. Our procedures and protocols over the past 15 months have served us well, and we are committed to remaining vigilant in all necessary measures to ensure student and staff safety. Making masks optional will provide the choice to students and staff who may be concerned in the fall. None of us wants to slip back into the dark days of this pandemic. However, we are eager to embrace the bright future we believe is ahead for us all.

Sincerely,

Nicole Pormilli

Nicole Pormilli, Superintendent of Schools

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