

Olmsted Falls City School District

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December 31, 2021

Dear Bulldog Families,

I am writing to provide you with an important update related to protective facial coverings for Olmsted Falls City Schools. The district has received communication from two medical groups—the Ohio Hospital Association and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. The letter from the Ohio Hospital Association can be viewed [here](#). While everyone has their own opinions about how to handle COVID-19 these days, I must rely on information from those in charge of overseeing the health of all of us. Moreover, when an unprecedented plea such as this is made from those in charge of Ohio’s hospital network, it must be given extra consideration. Finally, COVID-19 case modeling data has been provided to us from Case Western Reserve University as well, and it demonstrates that a case surge will continue through January. This can be accessed [here](#).

What is the announcement?

Throughout this very long journey of navigating through COVID-19, the district’s main goal has been to remain open. Students learn best when they are physically in school. With the significant rise in COVID-19 within our state, region and local community, this goal is presently at greater risk. As a result, **beginning January 3, 2022** I will be reactivating OFCS School Board Policy [8450.01](#). For students who do not come to school with a mask, one will be provided. This policy is for all district buildings, and it will be in effect for evening events that take place on OFCS property as well (***including athletic contests***). This policy will be **re-evaluated on January 28th**. ***I would respectfully request that if you attend an evening event you adhere to the district’s policy. If you cannot, then I’d encourage you to watch the event on-line from your home.*** Our district staff cannot act as the “mask police” and it is imperative that those in our stands remain Safe, Respectful, Responsible and Kind to one another, much like we expect our students to be.

What data did you consider?

Over the past several months the district has been using our own building data to make the masking decision and by-and-large our COVID-19 numbers have been relatively low and manageable. The recent spike in the number of cases coupled with the fact that we do not have current building data (due to winter break) to assist us with this decision are the reasons why we need to rely on data within our region and local community.

During the past month our region and community have seen the highest levels of COVID-19 since the virus was originally discovered. While it does not appear to be as devastating to those who have been vaccinated or previously had COVID-19, it is highly transmissible. For example,

the Positive Test Rate currently sits at 36.5% for the county, and the case rate for 44138 is 2,203 per 100k. There have been 493 new cases of COVID reported within the past 2 weeks within our community. During previous measuring periods, case count data in 44138 was around 70. The county numbers represent a 1000% increase from previous levels and the data from 44138 represent an approximate increase of 600%. Ohio's current COVID-19 numbers are some of the highest in the Nation.

I know that this decision will be popular with some and very unpopular with others, it is however necessary at this time. Our goal continues to be to keep students and staff in school. We are at our best when we have in person instruction and it is important that we keep these measures in place to allow us to accomplish the goal of staying in school when we're in the middle of an unprecedented COVID-19 surge.

Effective with our return to school this Monday, the district will also begin following the recently updated quarantine and isolation guidelines released by the CDC earlier this week and adopted by the Ohio Department of Health (click [here](#) for the document). The new guidelines reduce the length of time individuals need to be isolated/quarantined and will further assist with keeping students and staff in school.

Like all of you, I'm hopeful that 2022 will bring us closer to normalcy in spite of this initial setback. I remain incredibly proud of our Bulldog staff, students and families for your ongoing resilience and support.

Let me end by wishing all of you an early Happy New Year. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James L. Lloyd

Jim Lloyd, Ed.D.
Superintendent