

HARDING TOWNSHIP SCHOOL

Dr. Matthew A. Spelker
Superintendent of Schools

Mrs. Beverly Vlietstra
Interim School Business Administrator



Dr. Mary Donohue
Principal/Director of Curriculum

Mr. Chris Magno
Director of Student Services

August 16th, 2021

Dear Harding Township School Community:

I hope everyone has had a wonderful summer recess so far. We are truly looking forward to welcoming our students and staff back in a few weeks for full day and in-person instruction. In addition to this letter, you will no doubt be getting additional communications in the coming weeks from HTS about the opening of school- so please stay tuned.

As you may know, on August 6, 2021, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 251 which states:

1. All public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools (collectively “school districts”), must maintain a policy regarding mandatory use of face masks by staff, students, and visitors in the indoor portion of the school district premises, except in the following circumstances:
 - a. When doing so would inhibit the individual’s health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;
 - b. When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face mask without assistance;
 - c. When a student’s documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face mask;
 - d. When the individual is under two (2) years of age;
 - e. When the individual is engaged in activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument that would be obstructed by a face mask;
 - f. When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;
 - g. When a student is participating in high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals; or
 - h. When wearing a face mask creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

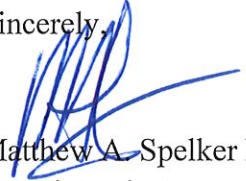
This Executive Order went into effect on Monday, August 9, 2021.

As a school district, which falls under the auspices of the New Jersey Department of Education, we take very seriously our obligation to comply with all State laws, regulations and Executive Orders, which importantly also have the effect of law. Compliance with this Executive Order is not optional, and there are serious penalties which could result for anyone or any school district which fails to comply with its mandates.

A large number of parents will no doubt welcome this Executive Order, especially in light of the recent uptick in Covid cases within New Jersey, as well as throughout our nation. On the other hand, some parents may not welcome this mandatory directive. While I understand that some parents may object to their children wearing masks, the fact remains that, unless an exemption applies, we will require all students, teachers and visitors to our schools to wear masks. Of course, if the Executive Order is later rescinded or modified to give local districts the authority to make the decision regarding masks, we will evaluate all of the circumstances at that time and make a decision, based on prevailing facts, recommendations from local, state and national health agencies, in the best interests of our entire school community. There is no predicting what the school administration will decide at that time; it will be entirely situation-specific, and the decision will remain with the administration itself.

I hope everyone enjoys the remaining weeks of the summer recess and I thank everyone for their anticipated cooperation with our health, safety and welfare protocols.

Sincerely,



Matthew A. Spelker Ed.D.
Superintendent
Harding Township School

Cc: Dr. Mary Donohue- Principal/Director of Curriculum
Mr. Christopher Magno- Director of Special Services