



## REDBANK VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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September 16, 2021

Dear Parents,

When the mask mandate was issued this school year, the district interpreted the order and the exceptions in a way that permitted parents to send in reasons under exception 3B for students to be excused from wearing a mask. Friday afternoon, school district administrators across the state received an official letter from the Acting Deputy Secretary of Education, Sheri Smith, notifying districts that President Biden announced a series of additional federal measures to help bring the pandemic under control. She also shared the attached letter sent by the Secretary of Education (Noe Ortega) to a Pennsylvania school district who did not follow the mask mandate. Also, Dr. Smith further clarified for all districts that, "Any school entity simply permitting a parent's sign-off without evidence that the student has a medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering is not in compliance with the Order".

Starting on Monday, September 20, 2021, all students who have not submitted medical documentation stating that a mask cannot be worn, shall be required to follow the Department of Health's masking mandate while in school buildings and while being transported on school district provided buses/vans.

We understand that strong feelings exist on both sides of this mandate. Be assured that the school district does not support any one side of this debate. We have worked hard to allow parents to choose how their students would respond to the mandate, but now that option is no longer within our control. As the attached letter states, personal lawsuits can be brought against administration and the board for failure to comply. As a state agency, we must comply. There is no local control on this issue.

Should you wish to provide feedback, the following contact information is provided:

**Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health – Alison Beam (717) 787-9857**

**Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education- Noe Ortega (717) 783 – 9780**

**Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education – Sheri Smith (717) 772 –4557**

**Governor Thomas Wolf (717) 787 – 2500**

This news, paired with the current state of teacher contract negotiations, may be unsettling to some of you. I would ask that, together, we continue to move forward as a team and have open and honest communication regarding what is best for the students in the Redbank Valley within the parameters of the law. I will continue to provide updates as they become available.

Sincerely,

Amy Rupp, Superintendent