

CARMI-WHITE COUNTY



Home of the Bulldogs

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5

Brad Lee, Superintendent

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August 13, 2021

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
ISBE State Superintendent
100 N. 1st Street
Springfield, IL 62777

Dear Superintendent Ayala:

At our special public meeting called on Tuesday, August 10th, the School Board of the Carmi-White County Community School District # 5 made the difficult decision of opening our 2021-22 school year by abiding by the recent August 4th *Executive Order* mandating masks in all P-12 public schools regardless of vaccination status. This very short notice prior to our teachers starting school on August 12th left parents, school administrators & teachers, and education support personnel scrambling to update our already approved required 2021-22 *Plan for the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services* that focused on local school board control in implementing preventative measures approved by the State earlier this summer in the fight against Covid-19 within our community while protecting our children.

We understand that the CDC and other health agencies continue to recommend vaccinations as the number one strategy to reducing Covid-19 severe illness with masks & social distancing protecting not only the user but those around them. Our School District was one of the few if not the only one last year in southeastern Illinois to open the school year on time and continue with in-person & remote learning for our students through May of 2021. Our School Board is very proud of our school administrators, teachers, non-certified, and support staff in all working together to accomplish this feat based on the health crisis we all faced throughout Illinois and surrounding states. Needless to say, our parents & community also played a critical role in successfully completing our 2020-21 in-person school year.

We feel that local control of onsite school preventative measures in fighting the spread of Covid-19 is extremely important. Our School Board relies upon guidance from you, the CDC, the Illinois Association of Public Health Administrators, the Illinois Department of Public Health, locally the Egyptian Health Department who has been instrumental in monitoring reported local cases, positive results, tracing, & quarantines, and other reliable health sources.

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala

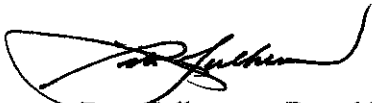
Page 2

August 13, 2021

With other School Districts around Illinois now disobeying our Governor's mask required August 4th mandate in 2021-22 school openings, it has put unwarranted stress on our Board members, families & children, and educators – splitting our community in two which has created an unhealthy living & learning environment. On behalf of our School Board, families & children, educators, and community as a whole I ask that you use your position & influence to assist school districts in returning to a local decision-making process by School Boards that will factor in current individual local community/county Covid-19 cases (trends/testing/etc.) combined with preventative measures they have in place individually to ensure a safe & healthy learning environment within their school buildings & community.

The longer mask requirements stay in place, more school districts will be pressured into disobeying the mandate which in turn will put more pressure on those trying to remain “legal” in the eyes of the State of Illinois. This will only further divide communities, families, and educators within those School Districts – harming our children while negatively impacting School District community relationships for perhaps years to come.

On behalf of our students & community, please return Covid-19 decision making to the local level. Thank you.



Pete Fulkerson, Board President

Carmi-White County Community School District # 5, Carmi, Illinois