



Richmond-Burton CHSD 157
Nippersink SD 2

Office of the Superintendent

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February 6, 2022

Over the past two years, schools in Illinois have been under mandates issued by Governor J.B. Pritzker and enforced by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) that require masking and close contact exclusions.

As a result, a lawsuit was filed in the fall of 2021 by downstate attorney, Thomas Devore, on behalf of hundreds of parents who opposed these mandates. Arguments in the case were heard throughout January in a Sangamon County Court with Judge Grischow presiding.

Late on Friday, February 4, Judge Grischow entered a temporary restraining order (TRO) that voids the Governor's executive orders and rulemaking by ISBE and IDPH on the following issues:

1. Mandatory masks in schools
2. Mandatory exclusion from in-person learning, if defined as a "close contact"
3. Mandatory weekly COVID testing for unvaccinated school personnel

Prior to the Governor issuing these executive orders in the fall 2021, the Nippersink SD 2 and Richmond-Burton CHSD 157 Boards of Education had already voted at their July meeting to make facemasks optional for the 2021-22 school year.

As of Monday, February 7, 2022 the Board's July decision to make face masks optional will be in place for all schools in both Districts. The choice to wear a facemask will be left to the student and their family. However, there is still a Presidential Executive Order mandating face masks be worn on school buses and we ask for your cooperation on this issue.

Both Boards of Education, school administration and staff ask that students and families respect the choice each individual may make when deciding to wear or not wear a face mask. Any bullying or harassment toward a student or staff member based on their individual or family choice will not be tolerated.

Students who are positive for COVID-19 will still be required to stay home for at least five days, and then only return when symptom and fever free. Students who are considered close contacts will be notified, but not excluded as long as they remain negative for covid-19. Both District 2 and District 157 strongly encourage parents to seek out testing for Covid-19 if they are notified that their student has been identified as a close contact.

It is important to also understand that Governor JB Pritzker has filed an appeal to overturn Judge Grishow's decision and has asked that the case be expedited. We expect the appeal process to take approximately two weeks before a final ruling is issued. If the

Governor's appeal is successful, and the court reinstates his authority to issue executive orders mandating universal masking in schools, the Districts will have no choice but to follow the court's legal ruling.

Finally, both District 2 and District 157 will continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and will not hesitate to reimplement some or all of these mitigations on a short-term basis if required. The safety of all our students and staff remains our number one priority.

We will continue to provide our students, staff, and families updates as more information becomes available. Thank you for your support and patience throughout this process.

Sincerely,

Tom Lind

Dr. Tom Lind
Superintendent of Schools