



TONAWANDA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

100 HINDS STREET
TONAWANDA, NEW YORK 14150
716-694-7784-Phone 716-695-8738-Fax



TIMOTHY A. OLDENBURG, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

March 4, 2022

Dear Tonawanda City School District Families, Students, and Staff:

This week has been an incredible transition in our schools. Many students and staff have decided to unmask based on the Governor's and NYSDOH mask mandate change to a mask optional position. As I visited classrooms and observed students and staff in our school buildings the increased energy and excitement was unmistakable. Many people told me it felt like the first day of school. Research suggests that 90% of communication is non-verbal. Seeing smiles, laughter, and joy unmasked was a tremendous boost to our school environment and how we relate to one another.

Our district will continue to work to maintain our priority on safety for students and staff when in our school buildings. We recognize that COVID concerns exist and that careful attention must be considered as we move forward. Here is some information from the recent NYSDOH guidance changes:

- Masking is optional for all people in schools and on school buses (including cafeterias, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and while participating in school activities)
- If a person is returning to school from isolation, masking is required during days 6 through 10 after a COVID-19 infection

I am proud to announce that our district has not had a reported case of COVID from the ECDOH or any individual that attends our district buildings since February 16, 2022. Although this trend is commendable and supports our initiatives to maintain a safe school for our students and staff, we will continue to carefully monitor our operation.

It is a continued recommendation that students, staff, and visitors do not attend or enter a school building if they are ill. Additionally, anyone that has symptoms of COVID should be tested for COVID during their absence and before returning to school.

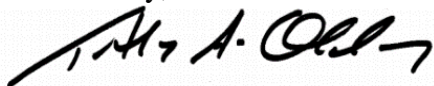
Beginning on Sunday, March 6, 2022, families and staff will receive a weekly reminder notice via email and text to be reminded of the attestation of entering our school buildings each day absent symptoms of COVID. Students and staff will be given an at-home COVID test by the district when they present symptoms of COVID, as requested. This test result can be used to

return to school if negative or must be reported to the school and the ECDOH if positive for COVID.

I encourage individuals to discuss the latest CDC and NYSDOH guidance with their personal health care provider to make a decision regarding the masking practice that is most appropriate while in school. We will share information regarding additional changes to practices and protocols when they are announced.

Lastly, I am proud of our students and staff for their perseverance, patience, and dedication to the mandated practices that were required. I am grateful for the care, consideration, and respect that has been shown this week to every person that attends our school in respect of their decision to wear a mask or to unmask. This mutual respect and understanding of others perspectives is a great example of Warrior Pride.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy A. Oldenburg", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Timothy A. Oldenburg, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools