

February 6, 2022

Dear Palos 118 Families:

On Friday, a judge in Sangamon County ruled that Governor Pritzker and local boards of education do not have the authority to implement universal mask mandates. The judge's ruling also bars named school districts from excluding students from school if they are identified as close contacts with positive individuals.

In response to the ruling and advice from legal counsel, the school district is recommending but not requiring children to continue to wear masks while at school until the appellate court has ruled. Federal law requires all students to continue to wear a mask when riding school buses. Close contact exclusion procedures will be updated to comply with the ruling.

The language in the ruling has caused confusion over whether the decision applies to only the named plaintiffs or all students. We have been meeting with legal counsel throughout the weekend to seek clarification. To add to the complexity of this issue, the Governor has filed a motion to set the decision aside until an appeals court has time to rule on an appeal. The appeal process will take approximately two weeks.

All other safety procedures remain in place including:

- Social distancing
- Screening programs
- Rapid testing
- Exclusion of positive and symptomatic students from school
- Improved ventilation and air filtration
- Enhanced cleaning and sanitizing procedures
- Increased hand hygiene

If you would like to participate in the school district's screening and rapid testing programs, please fill out this [consent form](#).

In addition, COVID-19 vaccines are available for all students aged 5 and older. Vaccinated students aged 12 and older may be eligible to receive a Pfizer booster. We continue to encourage parents to consider getting their children vaccinated or speak to a physician about concerns they may have regarding vaccinations.

Mask optional policies are inevitable as we learn to live with COVID-19 in the long run. Please be mindful of the current pandemic conditions and our shared commitment to keeping schools open safely.

Overwhelming community support for our safety plan has allowed us to focus our attention on what is most important: teaching and learning. We need your partnership

now more than ever as we navigate through what we hope will be the last major wave of this prolonged pandemic.

Thank you for your patience during this confusing and challenging time. This continues to be a very fluid situation and the school district will continue to follow the law. We will update the community when more information from the courts becomes available.

Best regards,

Dr. Anthony Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools