

Regular Board of Education Meeting
Virtual
February 14, 2022 7PM

1. Call to Order

Dr. Nugent, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03PM. Other Members present: Cindy Luty, Cindy Dupointe, Deborah Burke-Grabarek, Megan Gallant, and Dan Harris. Also present: Dr. Seitsinger; Superintendent, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

Dr. Nugent acknowledged the unfortunate passing of Tom Turner. Tom's work on the board was greatly appreciated and it was a pleasure knowing him.

Dr. Seitsinger stated that a Tom Tuner Memorial Fund has been set up in his honor. Donations can be made at Preston Town Hall. Dr. Seitsinger explained that a Preston Paw Award will be presented to Tom's family in recognition of his kindness, hardwork, and continued service to our community.

2. Public Comment

In March our meetings will return to face to face, in person meetings. For this meeting emails were sent in to be read during Public Comment. Dr. Nugent summarized 26 emails that were received prior to the meeting. They will be attached to these meeting minutes. Dr. Nugent then invited community members on the Google Meet to speak.

Amanda Phelps: Parent who supports unmasking.

Callie Moore: Parent who supports choice.

Chrissy Pappas: Parent and School Employee who supports unmasking.

Chris McNeil: Preston Teacher who supports unmasking. Believes this will reduce anxiety and stop taking time away from instruction.

Chris Pickett: Preston Teacher who supports masking.

Courtney Ennis: Parent who wishes the Board meeting were advertised by sending home a notice to parents. She stated that she was disappointed that emails were summarized and not read. She is in favor of choice and unmasking. Children are missing out on facial expression, etc.

Mrs. Lemire: Parent who supports unmasking. COVID is still contracted while wearing masks, so it is time to unmask.

Danielle and Matthew LePage: Parents who support unmasking.

Dawn Price: Parent who stated that the teachers' opinions matter. They are with the children all day.

Mr. Cavaggia: Parent in favor of unmasking.

Jacquie Burzycki: Preston School Nurse who is in favor of wearing the masks until the COVID positivity rate drops considerably.

Jenny Sevigny: Preston Teacher who wishes to maintain masking for those who cannot be vaccinated. She would like to continue masking until CDC says otherwise or until student vaccinations rise.

Jill Charron: Parent in favor of unmasking by choice.

Jon Hoffman: Parent in favor of unmasking by choice.

Kayla Thompson: Parent who is concerned with other protocol that will be affected by unmasking; student group work, parents volunteering in classrooms, etc.

Kelly McNamara: Parent who favors choice. She worries kids have been missing out. They can't read facial expressions, etc.

Kim Tondreau: Parent who favors choice.

Kyle Avery: Parent who supports unmasking with choice. He has a speech delayed child and believes masks are a barrier for the child's learning.

Meghan Campbell: Parent in favor of unmasking. She also has a child with a speech delay. It has been very difficult to close the educational gap during this time.

Melissa Durkee: Preston Teacher who favors choice.

Nicole Piscitello: Parent who believes this should not be a difficult decision. The Governor lifted the mandate. We have freedom of choice. It's time to use it.

Nicole Serra: Parent who agrees with statements of the previous parent. Her 2 young children have never known school without masking. It has become a disservice to the children.

Stephanie Robillard: Parent who would like to see masking continue until warmer weather when we can open windows and go outside more.

Sarah Tomis: Former Preston Student who cares about the entire community. Agrees with freedom of choice but asks that people listen to the facts before making a decision.

Susanna Curtis: Parent who is in favor of unmasking but prefers to wait until after flu season ends.

Tom Wilbur: Parent who supports choice.

Vicky Spicer: Preston Teacher who agrees we should continue masking. She worries about students taunting one another etc.

3. Consent Agenda

The consent agenda was accepted as presented.

4. Superintendent's Reports/Updates

Moved, to discuss the Governor's Mask Mandate first. Luty/Harris. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Dr. Seitsinger puts the safety of students, families and staff first and foremost. Masking on buses will not change. This mandate will be held in place even if we allow a choice to mask in schools. The Senate voted in favor of ending masking on 2/28/22. We will wait for guidance from the DPH and CSDE. If we make the decision to allow people to choose, the staff will not be able to police the mask wearing. Taunting or harassing will not be tolerated under any circumstance. Dr. Seitsinger would like to continue to recommend mask wearing with the option of choice due to stable mitigation systems and the lowering of the positivity rate. Board discussion followed.

Cindy Luty thanked parents for speaking up. It is a big decision to make and she feels comfortable supporting option of choice and waiting for DPH and CSDE guidance.

Cindy Dupointe stated that the COVID positivity rate is dropping drastically. Anxiety, suicide and speech referrals are at an all-time high. She believes we need to worry about the long term effects of masking on the mental health of our children. She believes in choice.

Megan Gallant is not opposed to choice. She believes the board has a duty to children and staff. She asked whether or not that was a plan to reinstate masks if the positivity rate climbs. Dr. Seitsinger stated, yes, such a plan would need to be predetermined and supported by DPH and CSDE.

Dan Harris said that he did not think masks were needed to be worn on buses if we drop the mandate in schools. He asked that the Superintendent check on that. He believes in choice.

Dr. Nugent stated that he hopes we are transitioning from a pandemic to an endemic. He believes that all mitigation measures that we have in place are working together to help keep everyone safe. He recognizes that students, teachers and families have suffered over the last two years and believes that another wave is coming. Hopefully it will be an even milder variant. Dr. Nugent agrees with Dr. Seitsinger in that we move to choice but would like clarity on things like quarantining and awaits DPH/CSDE recommendations.

Moved, to recommend that (1) mask wearing continue until mitigation strategies are clarified with the DPH and the CSDE recommendations prior to February 28th. (2) After February 28th, starting on March 1st, mask wearing will be optional and a personal choice. Luty/Dupointe. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Equity Institute: Karla Vigil; CEO, introduced her team members, Kaitlin Moran and Katya Rodriguez. Karla asked that the Board members take a moment to review the EQI presentation enclosed in their board packets.

The Equity Institute will develop and implement innovative solutions for building more diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning and professional environments that can be incorporated into Preston's Strategic Plan. They use a four step process:

1. Discover and Design
2. Connect and Refine
3. Collect and Analyze
4. Report and Present

The group will present to the schools on Thursday, February 17th in order to begin this process.

Board discussion followed. The District is looking forward to the presentation on Thursday.

2022-2023 School Calendar: Dr. Seitsinger presented two versions of the 22-23 Calendar. One version incorporates the BOE Finance meetings and BOE meetings as previously voted upon. The second calendar adjusts the dates of these meetings in August only. Dr. Nugent asked that we check for any meeting conflicts with the town before we make the adjustment. The calendar will be brought back to the Board at their March meeting.

BOE Vacancy: The process has been set in motion to fill the vacancy on the BOE. It has been posted and we await nominations. Applications will be collected and candidates will be interviewed by the current Board. The hope is to have the vacancy filled by the March meeting. The Board member's term will run until November 2023.

5. Principal and Special Education Director Reports

Dr. Seitsinger shared Mrs. Perzan's special education report in her absence. A new special education database will be implemented by June 30, 2022. It is called CT SEDS. This will require a lot of training and data collection. The ESY Program is in the planning stages for July 2022.

Ray Bernier: COVID positivity rates are down and this is helping with absences for both students and staff. PBIS held a virtual NED show earlier this month which was very successful. Parent/Teacher conferences will be held on 3/2/ and 3/3.

Dr. Davis-Tomczuk: She also reported that the COVID positivity rate is down but staff absences are continue to be problematic at the middle school. We continue to have a difficult time acquiring substitutes. SBAC testing will be conducted in person. No virtual testing allowed.

Dr. Seitsinger stated that he and other members of the administration are currently undergoing Narcan training. It is advised that all middle schools be supplied with Narcan.

He also said that both he and Dr. Davis-Tomczuk will have interns next year.

COVID DeteCT, a voluntary testing program for students began today at Preston Veterans' Memorial School.

A judge recently sent the Sheff v. O'Neill case and a school choice plan to the CT General Assembly that commits the state for the first time to guarantee an integrated education to every minority Hartford student.

6. Policy Review
None

7. Expenditure/Projection Reports

Cindy Varricchio; Director of Finance and School Business Operations stated that we are on track for 2021-2022. She thanked Vicki Schwery for her assistance. Mrs. Varricchio also stated that the audit is well underway and will be wrapped up soon.

At the next BOE Finance Committee Workshop the following will be discussed:

- Review of health/Dental
- 1st pass Plant Operations
- 1st pass Secondary Education
- 1st pass Transportation

The final draft of the 5 year Capital Plan was presented. It will now be moved forward to the BOF.

Moved, to approve the 5 year capital plan and forward it to the BOF. Harris/Dupointe. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Dr. Nugent and Dr. Seitsinger thanked everyone for their contributions tonight.

8. Adjournment

Moved, to adjourn the meeting at 9:14PM. Harris/Burke-Grabarek. Unanimous. Motion Carries.



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Public Comment for BOE meeting tonight regarding mask mandate

1 message

Shailyn O'Connell <shailynoc@charter.net>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 11:40 AM

Hello!

My name is Shailyn Vanase, my daughter Parker Vanase attends PVMS Preschool Class. I was made aware that tonight there will be a discussion about the mask mandate at tonight's BOE meeting and the potential for the schools disposition on the matter. I myself, along with being a concerned parent, am a Registered Nurse at Backus Hospital and am seeing first hand the effects COVID-19 is having not only on patients of all ages, but a very sensitive population of new moms and babies. I could go into detail about these experiences, and as much as they influence my choices for my families social distancing practices, they are not the same as other parents, children and faculty at the school and I would like to keep this as unbiased as possible. I would like to propose an option to send out a survey to parents of students that attend PVMS to collect data to see where the majority of your students' parents stance is on the matter. Many of my coworkers have received surveys recently on the matter that ask questions regarding: current social distancing practices, wearing of masks, vaccination status, intentions on potential for vaccinated, thoughts/feelings on not wearing masks in school anymore. Like the current world [of medicine] we have continued to learn more about this virus through evidence based practice, so why not apply this to such a vulnerable population?

If I am going to add any feelings that may come off as biased on the matter, my only thoughts are to hold off on uplifting the mask mandate until warmer weather is upon us and we are out of flu season- because yes, flu and cold season do still exist! Ultimately, my goal with voicing my concern is to suggest the survey so the school can collect data to make their decision on the matter. Although this vaccine has been mandated for many, it is a choice by parents weather many of your students are, or are not, and exposing them so quickly to one another in the midst of winter is frankly poor planning that will affect both students and staff.

I hope this [long winded] comment comes off no more than just a voice wanting to be heard and I look forward to what others bring to the table.

Thank you so much and have a great day!

Shailyn Vanase



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Board of Ed Meeting

1 message

Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 7:39 AM

Amanda Way <mandafaith01@gmail.com>
To: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Ms. Homski,

Good morning. My name is Amanda Way-Condry. This email is regarding the upcoming Board of Education meeting and in particular, the issue of the mask mandates.

I am the mother of a kindergartener at Preston Veterans Memorial School. I am in favor of maintaining the mask mandates we have in our Preston schools to ensure the increased safety and health of our students, teachers, and staff members.

The education of our children is extremely important and being in-person is vital to our children's ability to learn in the most successful way possible by having direct access to their teachers and peers. Evidence shows that wearing masks reduces the risk of contracting covid and spreading illness which results in the ability to maintain the school being kept open. Other districts around us have not been able to do so, and my fear is that if the masks come off, our Preston schools are at much greater risk of increased covid infection spread which will result in increased teacher, para, and student absences and the school could be forced to close as a direct result of lack of available staff to cover. The result will be students becoming further behind educationally and socially and create even more pressure on our extremely hard working teachers and administration to attempt to not just catch up but just to maintain the levels the students are currently at.

Another aspect I would like you to consider when making the choice regarding the mask mandates is the vulnerable population within your schools - the staff and students with asthma and other immune compromising diagnosis - that make them more susceptible not only to covid itself, but to the risk of more serious and potentially life-threatening symptoms should they contract it. My son is one of these students and I am asking you to make the decision to help protect him by voting to maintain the mask mandate.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Amanda Way-Condry



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Re: Comment for the Board of Education Meeting

1 message

Fri, Feb 11, 2022 at 7:03 AM

Roy Seitsinger <seitsingerr@prestonschools.org>

To: Jennifer Sevigny <sevignyj@prestonschools.org>

Cc: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, Ivy Davis-Tomczuk <davisi@prestonschools.org>

Hi Jenn,
Thank you for your email. It will be read during public comment Monday night. Have a restful weekend.
Be well.
Roy

From my iPhone

Please do not retransmit, duplicate or copy unless explicitly permitted by sender.

> On Feb 11, 2022, at 6:46 AM, Jennifer Sevigny <sevignyj@prestonschools.org> wrote:

>

>

> Good evening,

>

> I am hoping that the comments in this email can be shared at the board of education meeting on Monday night. I wanted to express my desire to maintain the mask mandate in Preston Schools. As a teacher who sees almost 100 students on any given day, I can't stress enough how important this mitigation strategy is. It is still recommended by the CDC that we mask in schools and masks have been shown to significantly reduce the spread of Covid-19. As a parent of two young children, one of whom is too young to be vaccinated and one who is at risk for possible complications from Covid, I hope that we can continue to wear masks to provide protection not only to students and their families, but also to teachers and theirs as well. While it may be an inconvenience, it is also the best mitigation strategy we have to prevent the spread of Covid-19 within schools and no science has supported the discontinued use of masks at this point.

>

> Thank you for your consideration.

> Jennifer Sevigny

> 7th and 8th grade science



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Spicer Public Comment for the 2/14 BOE meeting

1 message

Victoria Spicer <spicerv@prestonschools.org>

Fri, Feb 11, 2022 at 1:31 PM

To: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, Roy Seitsinger <seitsingerr@prestonschools.org>, Ivy Davis-Tomczuk <davisi@prestonschools.org>

Hello,

I am hoping that my public comment in this email can be shared at the board of ed meeting Monday evening. Thank you in advance:

Victoria Spicer
20 Mattern Road

I'd like to voice my concern regarding the possibility of lifting the mask mandate in Preston Schools. As a teacher who sees nearly 100 students on a daily basis across 5 classes, I feel that masks have been our strongest mitigation strategy thus far.

I am a huge proponent for keeping students in the classroom, and fear that by eliminating masks, students will be missing more in person learning due to potential exposure or illness.

Also, having taught middle school for 11 years, I know how difficult it can be for our students to traverse the dynamic social world of middle school. I worry that elimination of masks, or optional mask wearing, may cause social emotional pressures among peers, including: taunting, teasing, or bullying behavior.

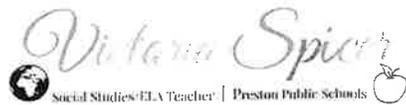
Lastly, I am the parent of a child who is too young to be eligible for vaccination, and fear the risk of infecting my child due to exposure at my workplace.

Having masks as a key mitigation strategy to prevent the spread of covid-19 has been essential as we are completely indoors with 47 minute classes.

My hope is that the board will consider the safety of both students and staff and their families during this time and continue the mandate of masks in the classroom until the end of this school year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

--

Victoria Spicer
Social Studies/ELA Teacher | Preston Public Schools 

Attention: Board of Ed Meeting 2/14/22
From: Heather Ballestrini, Preston resident/ School employee.
Reference: Transition to Unmasking in School

As we approach the mask mandate being lifted in our schools, I have listed my opinions that I would like to be shared at the Board of Ed Meeting.

- I believe that a two-part transition into not wearing masks during school is best in order to prevent confusion and anxiety among students and staff.
- The first part should include allowing students to unmask as long as they are sitting in their seats in a classroom with appropriate social distancing. Up to this point students and certain school employees' only mask breaks are during lunch time, and maybe an outside mask break if the weather permits.
- The second part is to continue with all other mitigation strategies.



Mask Mandate comments for 2/14/22 BOE mtg

1 message

Susan Strader <stradersu@prestonschools.org>
To: Roy Seitsinger <seitsingerr@prestonschools.org>
Cc: Gloria Homiski <Homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Fri, Feb 11, 2022 at 2:14 PM

Good afternoon, I would like to share some concerns I have about the elimination of the mask mandate in schools.
We should continue to follow the science:

- CDC still supports masking in schools
- State and Local DPH support masking in school
- We should unmask only at such time that the infection rate is lower and the vaccination rate of students is higher.
- We were directed 1 short month ago that adults in schools must wear the N95 or KN95 masks for **better protection for all.**

Concerns/Questions:

- Federal law requires masks on school buses.

Confusing for all.

- Teachers and staff cannot be the mask police for families who want their students masked.
- Zero tolerance for any student-to-student intimidation/comments/taunting for wearing or not wearing a mask.
- Zero tolerance for any adult-to-adult intimidation/comments/taunting for wearing or not wearing a mask.
- Zero tolerance for any parent-to-teacher intimidation/comments/taunting for wearing or not wearing a mask.
- What impact does the potential elimination of masks in school have on all other **mitigation strategies** currently in place?

As a minimum, I believe we need a measured step-by-step thoughtful implementation of any new directives regarding masking and other mitigation measures to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. As education professionals, we are intimately aware of the educational and social-emotional impact this Pandemic has wreaked on not only our students and families but also staff and their families. Masking is not the singular issue around social-emotional health, the disruptive and tragic impact of this pandemic is the major issue around social-emotional health for all during this historic time.

We have done a great job in Connecticut and in this **district** to ensure students and staff have been safe, educated, and had their opinions respected in school and in our communities. I applaud these efforts, this is not the time to be hasty and disregard the science regarding the pandemic and the proven mitigation measures in place:

Vaccination
Masking
Social distancing
Hand washing/hand sanitizing

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Strader
Preston Public Schools
K - 8 Technology Teacher

EAP Co-President
860-889-3831 x1013



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

BOE Letter 2-14

1 message

Jill Charron <lilmick22@hotmail.com>
To: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 12:00 PM

Good morning Gloria,

Please see below for my public comment for tonight's BOE letter. Thank you and have a nice day.

Jill Charron

02-14-2022

Dear Dr Seitsinger and Preston BOE Members,

I am writing this letter to support that the current mask mandate in Preston Schools expire on February 28, 2022. I understand the decision has many variables and "moving parts" that need to be considered and reviewed. However, I want to make sure that parent voices are heard and considered when making a final plan.

Additionally, has the district considered a "pulse check" or survey to offer parents regarding their current feelings and opinions about either the continuation or discontinuation of masks in the schools? I would suspect that this process has already been done with staff as their voices should be respected as well when making a final decision.

I do understand this issue will see support and opposition and I hope the district plan will be fair and considerate to satisfy both. Thank you.

Jill Charron
244 Route 165

Get Outlook for iOS



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

UN MASK OUR CHILDREN

1 message

Katrina Sharkey <ksharkey2013@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 11:52 AM

Good morning, I hope your day is going well. I am writing to you in concern of our children's health by being covered with cloth masks that do nothing but help spread germs. Our children have been forced to wear these ridiculous things that science now says are useless unless a KN95 or/and N95 is used.

This BOE meeting needs to be in person! Hiding behind our computer screens is not the right solution in this matter. Areas in Preston have horrible services where some families who support this, their voices will not be heard.

We are tired of hiding and forcing our children to hide their faces because of the common cold. Our children are being forced to breathe behind a mask when science shows that after 30 mins regardless of a mask you are breathing in the same air as everyone else. I know damn well that Preston Schools do not have an up to date air system. SO how are masks helping this?

They are not!

If the super bowl can be held, restaurants at full capacity, the grammys, emmys and other countless large gatherings are able to go on, WHY ARE OUR CHILDREN still masked? This is a political pull to keep us in fear. There is nothing to be in fear about a virus, Virus will always be here and they will always mutate. I want the children to have a normal school day. A place they can see their peers, hug them, give them high fives! See each others smiles, not guessing how someone feels inside because they're face is covered.

So many children have committed suicide or self harming (my daughter) because of this pandemic, It needs to stop Our children need to be children again. Kids need to see facial expressions for development! Could you imagine never knowing what your teacher looks like behind that mask? No because you knew these people before hand. Our children are suffering emotionally and physically due to the masks.

Please do the right thing for OUR CHILDREN OF THE FUTURE and get rid of those nasty masks that fall on the floor, get drooled and sneezed on.

Please want to welcome these children with smiles and hugs they was a school is suppose to be. A place of joy and safety. Their second home.

Signed a mom who only wants the best for her daughter and her peers.

Katrina Sharkey



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Opinion for 12/14 Board of Ed Mtg

1 message

Katherine Andruskiewicz <katandrusk@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 11:52 AM

Hello Ms Homiski,

I am a parent of two children at Preston Veterans Memorial school and I'm writing to share my opinion on the mask mandate for tonight's board of Ed meeting.

I support lifting the mask mandate for the school to reflect the current state of the pandemic. This would allow parents to make the decision based on the child's individual circumstances at a time when the risk is at a lower level.

I also support the creation of a decision framework to objectively guide the decision to reinstate the mandate if necessary. The need for children to wear masks should be reflective of the risk levels in the community, recognizing that in the future there may be a need to reinstate if community/school transmission increases.

Thank you,

Katherine Andruskiewicz
(860) 978-8608

Sent from my iPhone



BOE letter

1 message

Emily Caviggia <ecaviggia@killinglyschools.org>
To: "homiskig@prestonschools.org" <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 11:46 AM

To be read during public comment:

Dear Dr. Seitsinger and Preston Board of Education Members.

My name is Emily Caviggia and I am submitting this letter on behalf of my husband, Damian Houlden, and I. We reside at 8 Kimball Farm Rd.

Firstly, thank you for your continued dedication and commitment to our students and staff. We truly feel that decisions being made are ultimately in our students' best interest and that is why we are writing to you. We are requesting that you end the mask requirements in our Preston schools and make the decision to wear a mask optional. As educators and professionals who have worked closely with students throughout this pandemic, we have certainly supported this requirement as a mitigation strategy. Our son, as well the students that we work with, have willingly and diligently worn their masks out of respect for their peers and teachers as well as to keep themselves safe. With high vaccination rates and decreased cases of Covid-19 being identified in our town and our schools, it is time that we reflect on the necessity of these masks and their overall impact on the social-emotional wellbeing of our students as well as their academic success.

I have witnessed first-hand the difficulty that our students, especially our youngest learners, have experienced while learning their foundational reading skills and strategies. Masks are hindering our student's ability to appropriately learn their letters and sounds as well as their ability to read fluently. Pre-pandemic, in addition to verbal reminders to "watch my mouth", it was common for students to be supplied with personal mirrors while learning letter sounds, blends, and digraphs to observe the shape that their mouths took, their alignment of their teeth, and the position of their tongue. These strategies were provided as we understand how visual opportunities play an important role in our students' language and reading development. Masks are hindering our students' access to these supports.

Not seeing the mouth of a peer, teacher, or speaker also makes it disproportionately harder for our students to recognize positive emotions. Recent research indicates that masks make positive expressions seem less happy, suggesting that children might be less likely to perceive positive emotions in others when they are wearing masks. How awful it must be to go through a day not fully experiencing positivity and benefiting from the impacts of such interactions?!

It is our hope that soon we can see our Preston children being able to share a smile with a peer or staff member if they so choose. It is time that we look at the bigger picture of our children's health, keeping in mind that our present reactivity will shape their future.

In partnership,
Emily Caviggia and Damian Houlden



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Optional Mask request

1 message

Amy Fournier <amyfournier2@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 10:30 AM

To: "homiskig@prestonschools.org" <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Good morning,

I am writing as a parent and a concerned citizen, my children are in High School but have been severely affected by the use of masks daily for the last two years . I also have a 4 year old who has never had one put on her and won't as she was born very early and defied odds of having lungs issues which is why I would not allow a mask which does deplete complete oxygen to the brain as well as the bacteria riddled masks that are used over and over daily, weekly, monthly and now years we are up to .

Please understand that covid does not affect children and if it does it is a mild cold .. A healthy immune system is what we all need to now live with covid as the new normal as it will not be leaving . We must do better for our children and stand up to make masks a decision for the families to choose not the government or Board of Education.

Thank you,

Amy A Fournier



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

BOE meeting

1 message

Stacy Parent <parents352@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 10:29 AM

Good morning,

Just in case I am not able to make the meeting tonight I wanted to be sure I voiced my opinion to move towards optional for masks at school going forward.

Thank you,

Stacy Parent

Sent from my iPhone



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mask mandate

1 message

Susanna Curtis <susannacurtis95@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org
Cc: Chuck Curtis <chuck@curtishome.net>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 10:19 AM

Good morning Ms. Homiski,

I am a parent of a Kindergarten student at PVMS. My husband and I are in favor of eliminating the mask mandate in the Preston school district once the statewide mandate ends on the 28th. Our whole family is fully vaccinated and we are looking forward to returning to normal without masks.

Sincerely,
Susanna Curtis



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mask Choice in School

1 message

Nicole Serra <nicolemarie0219@yahoo.com>
To: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 10:15 AM

Good Morning,

I watched the Super Bowl last night and was unbelievably confused. I love football and grasp it pretty well, so I'll clarify. My confusion wasn't from my overall lack of understanding the game. It was from the massive crowds cheering in the stands.... How can upwards of 70,000 people sit in close proximity cheering, shouting, drinking, eating and embracing, watching a game without masks on make any sense when the very next morning parents are expected to send their kids to school with their faces completely covered? Logically, it doesn't add up.

There isn't a state of emergency here. Kids are proven to have little to no symptoms and the risks of mask-wearing are greater than the safety they provide. Some kids have never actually been to school without masks. They know nothing outside of the complete fear and panic generated from constant reminders to "pull up your mask to keep the germs away." How sad. Suicide rates are at an all time high in children, fear and anxiety are soaring and dirty masks are the main priority.

Please make masks optional in Preston. Give the choice to the parents. We have done the mask thing for 2 years now. It's time to get back to normal. Please give the kids the opportunity to breathe freely and show their beautiful smiles again.

Thank you,
Nicole Serra



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

BOE Meeting Masks

1 message

Wilcox, Danielle <Danielle.Wilcox@hhchealth.org>
To: "Homiskig@prestonschools.org" <Homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 9:07 AM

Good morning,

I am providing my opinion on the mask mandate for tonight's BOE meeting. At this time I feel wearing a mask should be an individual or parent decision. Children have the lowest profile and transmission rate of any group. Requiring children to wear mask at school and on the playground is harmful to the development process and has the propensity for long-term consequences.

I hope the BOE decides to remove this mandate

Danielle Wilcox, RHIA

Site Manager

Hartford HealthCare

Health Information Management/East Region

326 Washington Street, Norwich, CT 06360

P: 860.889.8331, Ext. 2438

F: 860.425.3879

C: 860.491.5248

E: danielle.wilcox@hhchealth.org

W: HartfordHealthCare.org

Hartford
HealthCare

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Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Re: Mask Mandates at school

1 message

Ilena Inman <magikeyz42@yahoo.com>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 8:51 AM

Reply-To: Ilena Inman <magikeyz42@yahoo.com>

To: "homiskig@prestonschools.org" <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Good morning,

I would like to provide my opinion on the mask mandate in schools up for discussion at the BOE this evening. Children have the lowest risk profile and transmission rates of any group. I fully support the idea that families should have a choice in whether or not to mask their children.

I believe that requiring children to be masked at school and at play are harmful and have the propensity for long-term consequences.

Thank you,
Ilena Inman

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Masking

1 message

Maria Smith <mariaellasmith@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 6:33 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

My daughter attends NFA and the mask mandate has been detrimental to many students. The disadvantages to the students' psychological and emotional well-being are far greater than any medical benefits. Please unmask our children.

Sincerely,
A concerned parent,
Maria Smith



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Preston Parent testimony

1 message

Brenda Peter <gratefulwife86@gmail.com>
To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 3:54 PM

What we have witnessed these past 2 years within our public schools has been shameful to say the least. Shame on us for causing our children so much unnecessary suffering. In the end, we have caused excessive harm to young lives for a disease that is so incredibly minor compared to any plague of the past. I find it truly horrifying that not one person within the educational community in CT is well-read when it comes to history & seems to have no idea of the magnitude of diseases in the past. At this point, who can fathom the willingness of "adults", who are responsible for the care of children, to be almost intent on causing them harm for no good reason. It is beyond sickening.

Masks are not natural. Masks are not normal. They instill fear in people which is why tyrannical governments use them to control people. All mask mandates need to end. It's a crime that they were ever allowed in the 1st place. Most especially they need to end for children.

Just because you can't "see" the harm being done does not mean that it's not happening.

Thank you.

Brenda Peter
Preston, CT



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Fwd: Comment on the mask policy discussion for the BoE meeting

1 message

Roy Seitsinger <seitsingerr@prestonschools.org>

Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 5:14 PM

To: Sean Nugent <s.t.nuge@gmail.com>, Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, Ivy Davis-Tomczuk <davis@prestonschools.org>

Folks, I already responded to Andrew and Cara. I told them we would read their email tomorrow and that I was optimistic that we would respond to the many issues related to masks.

FYI - holding a parent forum is premature with the action of the senate and the guidance from DPH and CSDE still unclear.

More tomorrow.

Be well.

Roy

From my iPhone

Please do not retransmit, duplicate or copy unless explicitly permitted by sender.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Andrew Sawyer <sawyer.andrewd@gmail.com>

Date: February 13, 2022 at 2:43:46 PM EST

To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Cc: seitsingerr@prestonschools.org

Subject: Comment on the mask policy discussion for the BoE meeting

Hello - This is from Andrew & Cara Sawyer from Miller Road. We have 3 kids at PVMS.

We would like to advocate to make masks optional and are opposed to the Preston Board of Ed imposing its own mask mandate on our children after the state mandate lapses. The cost of the mandate is high and the benefits to the children are unclear.

On the cost side, our 5 year old has speech issues, and has made little progress in kindergarten this year. Masks are the likely issue. Additionally, there is the immeasurable damage of not seeing the smiles and other social cues from teachers and peers that is stunting development for all of the kids, and particularly the younger ones.

The benefits of masks are not obvious for the kids themselves. In 2 years, fewer than 800 children have died of Covid per the CDC. While all deaths are a tragedy, for some perspective, car accidents have resulted in 8,000 fatalities for children in that same period. The data shows that the masks are about protecting adults, not kids. While adults need to be considered, it can't be entirely at the expense of the children as it has been for the past 2 years. Does the BoE have any data that shows the benefits of the mitigation efforts? What has contact tracing shown with respect to in-school transmission? How many cases have we seen of a kid spreading to a teacher or family member that subsequently needed hospitalization?

If the Board of Ed does decide to vote on a mask mandate, we would also request clearer communication on the data/rationale underlying the decision. The communication has been subpar over the past few months, in our opinion. Many neighboring districts are having dedicated in-person meetings just on the mask topic - by contrast, we are seemingly allowing limited comments during a regularly scheduled meeting conducted remotely. Back in January, Preston shut down after-school activities for 2 weeks without any clear rationale or communication to all parents. We get district-wide voicemails for every bus delay but not when the kids have no after school activities for 2 weeks. Further, the after-school ban ended after a week, seemingly due to parental lobbying, again with no clear communication on what changed. If we stay in masks, we should be told whether it's based on case counts, CDC guidance, or other factors. Or are we keeping the kids in masks indefinitely?

Bottom-line, it's time for masks to be optional for kids like it is for the rest of society. But if the BoE imposes your own mandate, at a minimum, we believe much better communication is in order with a clear explanation on why such a action is necessary.

Thanks for your consideration,
Andrew & Cara Sawyer



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Letter for public comment

1 message

Denielle Sandoval <dbeaudet24@gmail.com>

Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 10:33 AM

To: Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Good Evening,

I apologize for not making it to the meeting, as I'm coaching my daughter's basketball practice. I am writing in support of making the use of masks OPTIONAL for all students and staff. My husband and I have made the decision to vaccinate our children and no longer feel masks are necessary for all. COVID has continued to plague our country for the 2 years we have been wearing masks and at this point is simply a nuisance. I am an elementary public school teacher and in my experience the masks are more of a problem than they're worth. With consistent mask wearing, the virus has continue to spread in schools, despite the claim that it doesn't spread in schools; thus by making masks pointless. I respect the perspectives of those opposed to my opinion, so I feel we should all have a choice whether or not we send our children to school in masks. Thank you for your time.

Denielle Beaudet-Sandoval

Sent from my iPhone



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

BOE meeting re: mask mandate

1 message

Karissa Lemire <karissaannlemire@gmail.com>

Sun, Feb 13, 2022 at 9:42 AM

To: Karissa Lemire <KarissaAnnLemire@gmail.com>, "homiskig@prestonschools.org" <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, homiskig@prestonschools.org

Good evening-

I am emailing you regarding the BOE meeting coming up on Monday as I am working and not able to attend virtually.

My family strongly believes we need to remove masks from schools in accordance with the governors announcement. Covid ran rampant through the school system this winter. Masks were being worn the entire time and it was still able to spread quickly. Masks are not preventing the spread of Covid, but they are preventing kids from being kids. Children need to see each others faces to properly interact and grow. They need to stop living in fear and stop being afraid of something that is never going away. Mental health is more important than pretending masks are preventing Covid from spreading. Please remove the masks from our children!

Thanks,
Karissa Lemire



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Mask Mandate

1 message

MARK MULLANE <lface@aol.com>

Sat, Feb 12, 2022 at 10:23 PM

To: homiskig@prestonschools.org

Good Day,

I would just like to go on the record that Preston schools should lift the mask mandate and allow families to make their own choice going forward. It is abundantly clear that children are mildly affected at best, learning can return to normal, and with teachers vaccinated there is no reason not to return to return to pre pandemic practices.

Best regards,

Mark Mullane

Sent from Mark's iPad



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

BOE

1 message

Lauren LaBelle <laurie426@gmail.com>

Sat, Feb 12, 2022 at 3:57 PM

To: "homiskig@prestonschools.org" <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

I would like to voice that our household would like the mask mandate lifted in all of Preston schools. Our kids have suffered for two years and are ready to have normalcy back. Vaccinated or not all children should have the right to breathe, see the smiles of their peers and not be restricted any longer. The masks should be removed for all and not be forced on those who are not vaccinated. It is up to the parents to decide with their children the comfort level and what the needs for the household are. Those who wish to keep a mask on have that right, but we have come to a transmission level that is safe for our children to remove them.

Lauren & Scott LaBelle



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Letter to be read at the board of ed meeting

1 message

Nicole Piscitello <n.m.piscitello@gmail.com>

Thu, Feb 10, 2022 at 11:40 AM

To: Homiski Gloria <homiskig@prestonschools.org>, Cindy Dupointe <dupointec@prestonschools.org>

Hi Gloria,

Can you please have this letter be read at the board of ed meeting or better yet allow me to read it myself at the meeting.

I, Nicole Piscitello, am a resident of Preston and mother of an elementary school student. I am urging the Board of Education to allow our children to show their beautiful smiles on February 28th and NOT TO REQUIRE that masks be worn at school starting on that date. I simply believe that giving the freedom of choice regarding wearing masks in school is the best option for everyone in the community now that the state mandate has been lifted. It is a simple win/win for everyone and it aligns with our governor. Preston should give this freedom of choice no matter what the local health department suggests or what any other local school district decides. For those of us that feel comfortable allowing our children to light up the room with their smiles we have been waiting a very long time. Prolonging it will cause resentment and unnecessary aggravation for all of us on both sides of this issue.

5 Reasons to allow our children to show their smiles:

1. The mask mandate was put in place by our governor and you implemented it without hesitation
2. The mask mandate has been lifted by our governor and you should implement it without hesitation
3. Continue to wear a mask if that makes you feel comfortable
4. Do not punish families that chose not to wear masks
5. Give all of us the freedom of choice on Feb 28th

Kindest regards,

Niki Piscitello

A vertical smudge of ink or dirt located on the right side of the page, extending from the bottom towards the middle.

Dear Dr. Seitsinger,

Thank you for all you do! I consider it an honor and privilege to teach instrumental music here in Preston. I am thankful for a place where I can stretch my creative teaching "chops" and do things that I might not be able to do in other school districts. I look forward to a bright future of concerts, festivals, and musical successes.

Regarding the mask mandates, I understand this to be an incredibly heated issue. There are concerns of safety, mask efficacy, civil rights and liberties, fear of spreading the virus, and a host of other complex issues. I believe that when given the opportunity for discussion, our parents should be able to decide for themselves how they manage masks with their children.

The data is obvious. Young people have an extraordinarily high survival rate to the virus and the case fatality rate is extremely low (under 1%). They have the opportunity to get vaccinated if they wish, or they can take other over-the-counter medicines to help improve their physical condition.

There are child psychologists who are seeing damaging results of universal masking, especially at school. Results include increased frustration, depression, suicidal thoughts, inability to concentrate, and a desire to be anti-social / alone. In my humble view, this is not a sustainable way of life. Mitigation must not be more harmful than the virus.

It deeply saddens me to see a breakdown of functionality because of this issue. Relationships between friends and family have been severed. Arguments and contempt on social media seem infinite.

My hope and prayer is that when mandates *are* finally lifted, our learning community can break free of fear-addiction and live healthy confident lives.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this and hear my point of view.

Thank you very much for your thoughts and considerations!

Joe Durfec



Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>

Re: Mask choice for meeting tonight 2/14

1 message

Gloria Homiski <homiskig@prestonschools.org>
To: Sean Nugent <s.t.nuge@gmail.com>

Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 6:23 PM

Now I have Fonner. We match.

Gloria Homiski
Executive Administrative Assistant
Preston BOE
1 Route 164
Preston, CT 06365

On Mon, Feb 14, 2022 at 4:40 PM Sean Nugent <s.t.nuge@gmail.com> wrote:

Sean Nugent
s.t.nuge@gmail.com

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Fonner <HFonner@telaid.com>
Subject: Mask choice for meeting tonight 2/14
Date: February 14, 2022 at 1:39:13 PM EST
To: "s.t.nuge@gmail.com" <s.t.nuge@gmail.com>, "hfb95@aol.com" <hfb95@aol.com>, "dupointec@prestonschools.org" <dupointec@prestonschools.org>, "prestonfarmscornmaze@gmail.com" <prestonfarmscornmaze@gmail.com>, "gallantm@prestschools.org" <gallantm@prestschools.org>, "h-daniel@sbcglobal.net" <h-daniel@sbcglobal.net>, "seitsingerr@prestonschools.or" <seitsingerr@prestonschools.or>

Good afternoon BOE team members, Please take into consideration our family's choice below for the meeting being held tonight 2/14:

Both my husband and I are in favor of no masks or parents choice. He's in kindergarten and has been wearing a mask for 2 years now at preschool and now in kindergarten. They need to see each other's cute faces and get back to some sense of normalcy, the kids have been thru so much and have all taken it like champs.

Thank you,



Heather Fonner
Telaid | Project Manager
e: hfonner@telaid.com | p: 860-439-7391 | c: 860-460-0240

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