

**Central Bucks School District
School Board Briefs
August 25, 2021
SPECIAL MEETING**

Purpose of the Special Meeting: Central Bucks School District Health and Safety Plan

At the August 25, 2021 Special School Board Meeting, the Central Bucks Board of School Directors:

Announced that the Board held an Informational Executive Session from 5:30-6:00pm on August 17, 2021 regarding the Health and Safety Plan.

Announced that the Board held an Executive Session from 5:45-6:00pm on August 25, 2021 regarding Act 44-Emergency Operations Plan.

Announced that online Public Comment submissions were accepted and will become part of the meeting's official record within the minutes.

Announced that the Board held at Executive Session from 6:00-7:30pm on August 11, 2021 regarding HR Personnel matters.

Approved the minutes of the July 27, 2021 School Board Meeting

Heard Public Comment:

Please note: The first 15 speakers in favor of the proposed Health & Safety Plan and the first 15 speakers opposed to the Health & Safety Plan addressed the Board and the August 25, 2021 Special Meeting of the School Board. Individuals signed up to offer public comment after these first thirty speakers will be offered speaking time to address the Board at the August 31, 2021 School Board Meeting.

Karen Smith of Warwick Township– Opposed – Ms. Smith thanked Dr. Lucabaugh and the Board for serving the needs of our children at Central Bucks. Ms. Smith spoke about being opposed to masking, that masking children equates to child abuse, and that masks are not effective. Ms. Smith asked the Board to continue with the established mask-optional plan.

Joy Jarrett of Buckingham Township– In favor – Ms. Jarrett spoke about representing immunocompromised people who cannot be here, about children wearing masks to protect themselves and others, and about COVID long haul. Ms. Jarrett asked the Board to vote for everyone's health and safety.

Alexis Griffin, CBSD student – In favor – Ms. Griffin spoke about wearing face masks to protect ourselves and others, and about responsibility for her health and other peoples' health.

Evi Casey, CBSD student – In favor – Miss Casey thanked the Board for the new Health and Safety Plan, spoke about wearing masks, spoke about safety, and spoke about following COVID safety to be able to stay in school.

Charlie Casey of Doylestown – In favor –Mr. Casey spoke about the need for consensus among experts, spoke about the CDC, Bucks County Department of Health, and the PA Department of Health all recommending masking in schools. Mr. Casey encouraged the Board to approve the plan.

Anusha Viswanathan of Buckingham – In favor - ceded her speaking time to Kira Coviello of Buckingham Township. Ms. Coviello spoke about a relative's experience with COVID and thanked the Board for protecting families like hers who have already been through so much.

Matthew Hickey of Warrington – Opposed – Mr. Hickey spoke about Dr. Damsker's advice, giving parents the option to mask their children, low cases among children, and asked the Board to offer the mask optional choice.

Leslie Watson of Buckingham– Opposed – Buckingham –Ms. Watson spoke about Americans being divided but the focus should be on children, understanding the fear, but we must make decisions based on facts and not fear. Ms. Watson spoke about the ineffectiveness of masking children, and about parents having the right to make decisions for their children.

Jamie Walker of New Britain – Opposed – Ms. Walker read from a letter from Allison Beam sent to county commissioners offering guidance to schools to change their Health and Safety Plans. Ms. Walker asked if the Board thinks that we believe that Dr. Damsker changed his guidelines a week before school starts, if the Board is going to deny kids an education and asked for parameters to know when to take off masks.

Ian Smith of Warwick– Opposed – Mr. Smith thanked the Board for their service and spoke about harming a child's natural immune system. Mr. Smith asked the Board to say no to masking in our schools.

Donna Shannen of Doylestown– Opposed – Ms. Shannen spoke about choice, freedom, and inclusivity for our kids, and about another group of people who want control, division, and segregation. Ms. Shannen spoke about school boards trying to tell children to cover their faces. Ms. Shannen submitted a form titled "Definitions of Child Abuse as listed in the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law" (attached to official minutes) and spoke about parents having choice.

Jennifer Bish of Furlong – In favor – Ms. Bish thanked Dr. Lucabaugh and Dr. Leatherbarrow for their ability to pivot and incorporate the most up-to-date guidance and then ceded the remainder of her time to Dr. Melissa Drysdale of Doylestown. Dr. Drysdale spoke about peer-reviewed studies on masking, studies in other countries, the Delta variant, and about current vaccines working.

Jennifer Ventresca of Plumstead – In favor – Ms. Ventresca ceded time to Beenish Rashid of Warwick. Ms. Rashid spoke about focusing on helping our children's schools remain in-person, seeing children with mental illness because of schools closing, and knowing that mitigation works.

Jayd McFerson of Buckingham and Holicong – Opposed –Mr. McFerson spoke about COVID statistics for children, and about cloth face coverings not being effective in reducing virus movement and asked the Board to give children their childhood back.

Larissa Hopwood of Doylestown Borough – In favor – Ms. Hopwood spoke about her child's health, about masks being no different than other safety measures to keep kids safe, the need for masks and contact tracing in schools, and spoke about it being our jobs as adults to protect our children.

Krista Szczypiorski of Plumstead – In favor – Ms. Szczypiorski spoke about being in support of students wearing masks in school, especially children under 12 who are unvaccinated. Ms. Szczypiorski spoke about children being successful when they are supported by a team and asked the Board to make the decision that is right for the health and safety of our children.

Michelle Coccoli of Doylestown -Opposed - ceded her speaking time to Shannon Harris of Buckingham – Ms. Harris spoke about mandates and recommendations not being laws, grant funding not being withheld, a lawsuit in Pennridge, and her own challenge to temperature checks. Ms. Harris spoke about the CDC having no jurisdiction with regards to masking our children on buses and asked the Board to throw out this plan and follow the law.

Michelle Harvey of Plumstead– Opposed – ceded her speaking time to Holly Scholl of New Britain –Ms. Scholl spoke about her child’s negative health experiences due to wearing a face mask, her children deserving a Central Bucks education without any distractions or constrictions and asked that she have a choice for her children’s’ health.

Vonna DeArmond of Plumstead– Opposed – Ms. DeArmond spoke about nothing bad happening when we went mask optional in June. Ms. DeArmond spoke about the county services’ mask mandates, FAQs from the county commissioners, and a letter to school districts from Steve Santarsiero which all led to a proposed change to our Health and Safety Plan. Ms. DeArmond spoke about masks having negative effects on our children and asked the Board not to give in to political pressure and keep masks optional.

Pam Masciotro of Warrington– Opposed – Ms. Masciotro spoke about her child’s experience in college being very different from her senior year in CB. Ms. Masciotro spoke about the Board having the power to let students have a normal school year and asked the Board to vote no to this Health and Safety Plan.

Michael Lebiezinski of Doylestown – Opposed – Mr. Lebiezinski spoke about the CDC having a recommendation, not a mandate, to mask. Mr. Lebiezinski spoke about other countries not requiring mask wearing, quarantine rules, contact tracing, and the Board not having the statutory authority to mandate masks.

Lucina Verish of Buckingham – In favor – Ms. Verish spoke about her families’ service in wars and their understanding of service and sacrifice. Ms. Verish spoke about the wellbeing of children and their extended families being up to this Board. Ms. Verish asked the Board to vote yes to the proposed Health and Safety Plan so we can keep our children in school this year.

Howard Schargel of Plumstead– Opposed – Mr. Schargel spoke about the Bucks County Department of Health’s recommendation, not mandate, of masks. Mr. Schargel spoke about an emergency meeting with Bucks County Superintendents called by the County Commissioners. Mr. Schargel spoke about doing more damage and harm to kids’ social and emotional well-being than the potential harm of COVID.

Mara Witsen of Chalfont– Opposed – Ms. Witsen spoke about this country not being a democracy and we do not follow mob rule, we hold certain rights that are inalienable, and those rights are not suspended during an emergency. Ms. Witsen spoke about the government not giving us liberties, but us inherently having them. Ms. Witsen spoke about children being more likely to commit suicide from anxiety disorders than they are to die of COVID. Ms. Witsen spoke about mandatory masks not being harmless. Ms. Witsen asked the Board to keep masks optional, and to not to step over the line of their authority.

Griffin Smith, CBSD student – In favor – Mr. Smith spoke about a new, rapidly spreading COVID variant, making the sacrifices necessary to finally end this pandemic. Mr. Smith spoke about vaccines, vaccine research, and the effectiveness of masks.

Mina Ritz of Furlong – In favor – Ms. Ritz spoke about the district’s dedication to students’ health, well-being, and safety. Ms. Ritz spoke about the rise of the Delta variant approaching a crisis. Ms. Ritz spoke

about not knowing the long-term effects of this virus, and her worry for her younger siblings who are too young to vaccinate returning to school. Ms. Ritz asked the Board to mandate masks in school.

Jim Barlow of Buckingham – In favor – Mr. Barlow spoke about his concern sending children to school without protection from a vaccine. Mr. Barlow spoke about getting vaccinations and asked the Board to protect our children and to stand up for what's right.

Nick Maio of Jamison– In favor – Dr. Maio spoke about the Board making a decision about something that is ever-changing. Dr. Maio spoke about the Board assuming liability if kids get sick should the Board make the decision to remain unmasked.

Mariam Mahmud of New Britain Township– In favor – Dr. Mahmud spoke about the Health and Safety Plan supporting the safety of our children, and that the decision made tonight affects children and families. Dr. Mahmud spoke about providing a school with masks and mitigation measures allowing less need for quarantine and knowing that in-person school offers benefits to the mental health of children. Dr. Mahmud asked the Board to support our kids and families.

Discussed the CBSD Health and Safety Plan on the agenda

Did Not Approve the CBSD Health and Safety Plan

Did Not Approve an amendment to the previously approved Health and Safety Plan to reflect mandatory masking for grades K-6 and optional masking for grades 7-12