April 5, 2021

Good afternoon,

I would like to provide further clarification on the decision to ease the face covering mandate that was recently lifted. I would like to say that the decision was not one that was made in haste, rather it was something that the Board of Education and I have been discussing for the past year. As a team, (the Board and I) we have done our best to remain transparent throughout the past year in regards to the COVID 19 pandemic. When this all started, we decided that we would follow the advice and recommendations of our local health department. Additionally, prior to each time one of the face covering mandates was ready to expire, we had additional conversations regarding how we would address this as a district. Each time, we decided that we would make our decisions based on recommendations from our local health department. I also have met at minimum, bi-weekly, with the Forest County Health Department in regards to all matters related to COVID 19. We have developed a very open line of communication as they are the health experts that we’ve relied upon to not only keep our school open, but also keep our students, staff and community safe.

I spoke with the health department following the repeal of the mask mandate last week. We had a lengthy discussion with the idea that we would receive both support and criticism regardless of the final decision that was made. We took into account many factors when making this decision. We have over half our staff, that I am aware of, who have received the COVID 19 vaccination. Our district has had very few instances where contact tracing pointed to transmission within the district. We discussed our current number of positive cases in Forest County and the downward trend that we’ve experienced. We looked at transmission rates among adolescents in general and how schools are not spreading the virus. Ultimately, we decided that some type of choice would be given in certain areas. In discussing options with the health department and to continue to offer a choice to advocates on both sides of the masking policies, we decided that we would allow students and staff the choice to wear face coverings or not when they can adequately socially distance. Finally, should there be changes at the State or even at the local level, our stance on face coverings could change immediately.

It is the intent of the School District of Crandon to keep the safeguards in place that we implemented in the Fall including: continued disinfecting of the building, staggered bus arrival and dismissal times, encouraging social distancing whenever possible, staying home when sick or when you have any symptoms related to COVID 19, frequent handwashing and staying home should you be quarantined.
Students should have a face covering for areas that they cannot socially distance in. It is strongly recommended by the District that students continue to wear a face covering.

Classrooms - When students are unable to maintain social distancing of less than 3-6 feet, they will need to wear face coverings.

Transition Times - When students are unable to maintain social distancing of less than 3-6 feet, they will need to wear face coverings.

Note - In regards to contact tracing, the School District of Crandon will continue to use the same guidelines that we’ve had all year. The face covering mandate being repealed doesn’t change our method of contact tracing.

Busses - Students will need to continue to wear face coverings while riding the bus due to the inability to socially distance.

Extra Curriculars - Participants will continue to wear face coverings when they are unable to socially distance. An example of this would be basketball and volleyball. Since golf, softball and baseball all allow for social distancing, it would not be required.

Recess - Students would not have to wear face coverings.

Lunch - Students would not have to wear face coverings. We will continue to follow lunch procedures as we have all year.

Thank you,

Larry Palubicki