

February 14, 2022

The Board of Education, Community High School District 99, met in Special Session with Action Item at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 14, 2022 the Administrative Service Center.

President Kupka appointed Aja Johnson to serve as the secretary pro tem.

Upon the Secretary pro tem's roll call, the following Board members answered present: Nancy Kupka, President; Mike Davenport, Vice President, and Members Christopher Espinoza, Jennie Hagstrom, Terry Pavesich and Joanna Vazquez Drexler. Member Sherell Fuller was absent.

Also present were Hank Thiele, Superintendent; Gina Ziccardi, Associate Superintendent; Rob Lang, Assistant Superintendent for Staff Services; Jeree Ethridge, Assistant Controller; Jill Browning, Director of Communications; Courtney DeMent, North High Principal; Ed Schwartz, South High Principal; Student Board members Scarlett O'Hara and Jade Toledano; and Aja Johnson, Secretary pro tem.

There were seventeen visitors. A copy of the Visitor Roster is attached.

1. 2021-2022 RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION PLAN

Dr. Thiele read an opening statement expressing appreciation for the communities' involvement and the work of the Board, who are volunteers. He stated the Administration will follow the Board's direction.

Dr. Thiele reviewed the COVID mitigation timeline starting in July of 2021, and noted that on August 2, 2021 the Board put in place mitigation efforts of face coverings and contact tracing, consistent with the recommendations of health agencies. Dr. Thiele stated the Board's rules were in place prior to the Governor issuing his Executive Order requiring masking. On February 4, 2022, a temporary restraining order was issued preventing the State from enforcing the Governor's rules for those Districts named in the lawsuit, which included District 99. Therefore, according to Dr. Thiele, the mitigation measures approved by the Board prior to the Executive Order are in effect, which include face coverings.

Mr. Schwartz, speaking on behalf of himself and Dr. DeMent, stated in two weeks the Governor is removing the mask mandate outside of schools and it is time to transition to making masks optional.

Dr. Thiele presented the Administration's recommendations, to be effective February 18, which included: following all Federal and State laws (which currently includes masking on buses and the potential outcome of pending or future litigation); sick students and staff will be expected to stay home; contact tracing/exclusions will end; and mask wearing will be respectfully recommended. Dr. Thiele stated the District would provide two KN95 masks to students and noted universal masking would still be required on transportation, which includes buses and in Driver Education cars, per Federal mitigation measures, and in the Health offices.

2. RECEPTION OF VISITORS – PUBLIC COMMENT

Debby Robertson, Ana Guido, Deb Davero, Jordyn Raymond, Erica Rausch, Brooks Johnson, Kevin Kuster, Noel Manley, Barbara Allen, David Pittinger, Steve Peters, Ben Pittinger, Hugh Califf, Isabella Folise, Sydney McCormick, Carolyn Guglielmo and Lilly Roche addressed the Board in support of making masks optional.

Dr. Thiele noted 235 Public Comments were been received via the online Google form, which was opened the day the meeting was announced, and the Board has had an opportunity to review those comments. He stated there were comments both in favor of continuing masks and making masks optional. Dr. Thiele stated the comments received would become a part of the Meeting Minutes.

3. MITIGATION MEASURES RELATED TO THE 2021-2022 RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION PLAN

Member Hagstrom moved and Member Davenport seconded the motion for the Board of Education the amend the mitigation measures related to the 2021-2022 Return to In-Person Instruction Plan approved at the August 2, 2021 Board of Education Meeting as presented.

Members of the Board expressed their thoughts and rational on whether or not masks should become optional, and stressed how much they care about the well-being of the students of District 99.

Student Board Members emphasized students and staff need to be respectful of the choices people make and both shared they would likely continue to wear masks.

Dr. Thiele stated the Administration will follow and carry out whatever rules the Board establishes and urged Board members to vote based on what they felt was best for students. He offered an alternative recommendation, for the Administration’s recommendations to be effective February 28, instead of February 18, noting there is no reason for students to mask once adults are no longer required to.

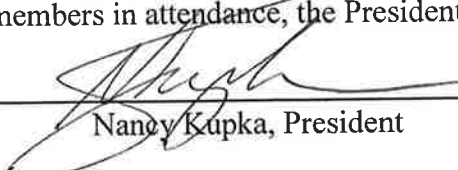
Member Hagstrom accepted the recommendation to have the new protocols and mitigation measures be effective on February 28. Member Davenport seconded the motion.

Upon the Secretary's roll call, Members Hagstrom, Davenport, Espinoza, Pavesich and Vazquez Drexler and voted AYE. President Kupka voted NAY. The President declared the motion carried.

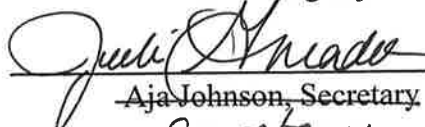
Dr. Thiele reiterated that masks would be required until February 28. Board members expressed concerns about how bullying would be addressed. Dr. Thiele stated students who felt bullied should go to a trusted adult and the Deans/Administration would follow through.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or discussion, Member Pavesich moved and Member Davenport seconded the motion that the meeting be adjourned. Upon the unanimous voice vote of the six members in attendance, the President declared the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.



Nancy Kupka, President



Aja Johnson, Secretary pro tem
Secretary

Community HIGH SCHOOL District 99



BOARD OF EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 14, 2022

VISITOR ROSTER

NAME

Debby Robertson
Ana Guido
Den Davero
Jordyn Raymond
Brooks Johnson
Erica Rausch
KEVIN KUSTEN
Noel Maulo
Barbara Allen
David Pittinger
Ben Pittinger
Steve Peters
Hugh CALIFF
Isabella Folise
Sydney McCormick
XXXXXXXXXX
Kathy Jay

Public Comments Submitted via Google Form February 14, 2022 Board Meeting

<p>Angela Homberg</p>	<p>Since there are unjust restrictions in place and I likely will not be able to actually go inside for the meeting on Feb 14th, I am submitting my comments here to the D99 Superintendent and School Board.</p> <p>We are disgusted with the fact that the school has decided to completely ignore the TRO put in place on Feb 4th by Judge Grischow and that D99 continues to dictate that students wear a mask in order to get an education. Many kids have been exercising their legal rights to a full in class education, without the restriction of a face covering. Instead, they showed up for school and were segregated from their classmates and denied access to the learning taking place in the classroom. This action has caused them to fall behind in classes and be separated from some of their friends, when all they wanted to do was finally be comfortable in school as well as fully see and communicate with their fellow classmates. For a school that supposedly bends over backwards to make sure everyone is welcome and equal, you had no problem kicking kids out of class and making them feel unwelcome and unequal.</p> <p>Most of the country came to the realization quite some time ago that people should be making their own choices when it comes to their personal health and their constitutional rights should not be denied any longer, but IL and D99 are way behind. The states that have mask mandates in place were no better than states without. Yet, you continue to violate students' constitutional rights. We demand to have a CHOICE!!! All of the "rules" regarding COVID mitigations, especially the mask requirement, need to be removed immediately. I use the word demand at this point because you have not listened to the parents throughout the entire COVID situation, and you have repeatedly made decisions that were and are not in the best interests of the students. WE are the parents. WE can determine what is best for their well being. You have failed over and over in doing that over the last 2 years and now our kids our paying for your bad decisions. So, let the parents do that and stay out of areas that are outside of your authority.</p> <p>At this time, everyone is able to evaluate and consider any perceived risks of wearing or not wearing a mask and make the decision that is best for themselves and their family. This has always been the case for anyone that has any type of health issue of any kind. Each family can determine what they need to do stay safe and take any precautions they feel necessary. For those individuals who believe the mask actually is doing something, no one is preventing you from wearing one. No is saying "No Masks Allowed". If you think the mask keeps you safe, then go ahead and wear it. It does not matter what anyone else chooses to do, especially if you think the mask protects you. This policy/rule/whatever you call it, is violating the constitutional rights of all students as well as your own teachers and staff. Remove all COVID rules and let students make their own choice on how they can get the education they are entitled. Allow your staff to make their own choice so they can provide the education they were hired to do. Allow parents and students attending sporting events, concerts, performances, etc to really enjoy the experience of watching the talented kids in this district. By giving your students and staff a CHOICE, this will be a start to get you on the path to equality for all.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Angela Homberg</p>
<p>John William Thornton</p>	<p>I appreciate all the work the board has done balancing the diverse needs of students and parents over the past two years. I particularly appreciate the fact that you have continued to offer choices to families with people at high risk for serious COVID complications. I realize that not everyone is in a position to stay home with their students, but many of us are. Having the option to keep my student home has reduced a lot of the anxiety I know many people have been experiencing. Again, thank you for your efforts to accommodate everyone and for your work in general.</p>
<p>Bobby Grogan</p>	<p>Masks ought to be optional for people in D99.</p>
<p>Deanna LaChappell</p>	<p>Please vote masks optional. If someone wants to wear a mask, and thinks the masks protects them, let them wear it. If someone does not want to wear one, do not continue forcing this on them. Let it be a choice! Covid cases are down. The masks mandates are being lifted EVERYWHERE.</p>
<p>Jessie Kilavos</p>	<p>Continuing to require masks after the CDC released data indicating that masks do not stop/slow/prevent the spread of Covid indicates that the board does not "follow science" or make decisions based on current evidence. Children should never be required to carry the burden from Covid and they should not be told it's their responsibility to protect adults. The last 2 years has created a gross amount of anxiety and fear for children and adults - the consequences will be long lasting. It is not realistic or logical to pretend that rules and mandates can guarantee safety - you're pretending that you can control something that is uncontrollable. Get rid of the mask requirement because it's the right thing, it's the logical thing and it's backed by 2 years of evidence.</p>

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Jason Matthesen	<p>It's time to stop the lies. Half of our country has been reopened. The stats and science are in. Stop picking on the kids. They're risk from covid is statistical zero. The cdc 18 months too late admitted masks do nil. The madness and insanity must stop. You cannot vaccinate or mitigate your way out of a pandemic. It was a human fallacy to think we had any effect on the spread.</p> <p>The omicron variant blocks delta and basically presents as a cold. Visa ve natural immunity. Come down from those ivory towers and stop with the authoritarianism. The agenda driven politicians have ruined any sense of credibility the 3 letter organizations had. The emperor has no clothes, 2 years of data has been accumulated.</p> <p>Those who make peaceful protest impossible make violent revolution inevitable. If you care about the children, the science and any sort of reality-based measures. The time is now. No more masks, no mandates, no more hypocrisy! End all COVID-19 related strategies now!</p>
Cara Galasso	This mask mandate needs to be optional! Our kids have been pawns in this government war for way too long. Every PERSON SHOULD HAVE the right to decide if wearing a mask is what they want.
Susan Chavez-Jimenez	Please make masks optional for students and staff, not based on metrics for indoor attendance.
Laura Hope	Masks should continue to be required until we are in a lower level of transmission and not requiring them is so directed by idph and the cdc. Children not wearing masks don't just expose each other. They expose staff and students with health conditions and family members with health conditions. We choose very carefully who we are in close contact with. We choose to not have close contact with unvaccinated people. We have an at risk family member. We will have no choice but be exposed to unmasked students. How can the school administration keep teachers and students safe when masking is recommended by the cdc and idph?
Leslie Opila Jordyn Raymond	Please continue to require and enforce mask use in school. me as well as a few peers of mine would like to speak at the meeting.
Nicole Proimos	<p>Many are going to argue about how we can't mask forever, we need to move on, or our children deserve it.</p> <p>None of those reasons change the fact that there is still a deadly virus raging in our community. The LEAST we can do is keep masks in place until those as risk, like my 4 year old child who CANNOT get a vaccination, have access to the vaccine.</p> <p>To pretend as if the only people affected by this are the teens in the building is unfair and unsafe.</p> <p>Last year when parents demanded we open, we opened. As disappointing as that was, one thing the Board and Dr. Thiele always stated is that we were looking at the community transmission rate. To waiver now is to prove that the loudest voices win, rather than following science and logic.</p> <p>Vote to keep masks in place.</p>
David McHugh	Masks are being dropped across the country and in our own back yard. It's time to make masks optional for our students at DGN.
Aaron Dennis	UNMASK OUR KIDS!
Heather Torrie	We need to follow guidelines put forth by the CDC and the state's health officers. Don't just change policy because of a noisy minority who happened to find a judge to agree with them. I think we should take the governor's lead on this.
Michelle Sirota	Requesting for the district to go mask optional
Reed Hois	Masks should be optional.
Jordyn Raymond	I would like to speak about the constitutionality of the mask mandate within our school and how the students have been treated recently for speaking up about masks.

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Andrea Johnson	<p>Please keep the mask mandate in place for the classrooms and hallways, this is the most effective tool at our disposal to keep our students and teachers healthy and IN SCHOOL! So many upperclassmen with college on the horizon can not academically afford being put back into an extended remote learning situation.</p>
Michael Passo	<p>It's time to go mask optional. The vast minority of the country is mask optional. Many school districts in Illinois are mask optional and lastly district 58 is mask optional. Enough is enough. These kids need to be kids. They need to see facial expressions. They have been robbed of some of the most important years of their lives. If we get another wave or variant that is as bad as the last they can put the masks back on. You need to provide metrics for when that will be so parents and students can be prepared. At this point there is no other choice than to approve the mask option. I have an eleven year old son in district 58. How would it make any kind of sense that his two older brothers need to wear a mask in school when he doesn't? ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!! Do the right thing.</p>
Elizabeth Carrasco	<p>I am requesting that District 99 follow the protocol given by a judge who is simply following the LAWS!!!! All children (and adults and HUMANS) deserve to have a choice and not be forced in to these ridiculous circumstances!!!! No child should have a mask covering their face for a virus that is NO MORE DEADLY than the flu!!!! This needs to stop! This is illegal, this is wrong on so many levels and if it continues I already have a large group of parents ready to start legal mitigations. Please free our children (and your staff) from fear and control and this complete lack of following the laws our great and FREE nation put in to place! We need to do better for the next generation! I truly hope you understand and if a child or staff member wants to wear a mask and keep distance, that is completely ok with my children and me, no bullying, no comments, but it should be a CHOICE!!!! Thank you for your time.</p>
Lakesha Giles-Ninic	<p>Mask need to be worn to protect those in closed areas vaccinated or not. No one should be exposed because some people feel it should be a choice. Medical facts have already been given and forcing something because it's a hot topic or not popular anymore isn't a reason to stop doing it. Everyone that comes in and out of the school have not been vaccinated and even those who've been vaccinated have gotten sick with COVID-19. I am not going to be concerned with my child getting a proper education and concerned about him being exposed to COVID-19 because mitigation are lifted. Rules are made to be followed. Thank you</p>
Matt Topic	<p>Thank you for enforcing the mask rules. Please keep it up.</p>
Rebecca Johnson	<p>Thank you for reviewing the Action Item topic in real time and not in a place when the Action Item was first written. We appreciate your time and future consideration on accurate thinking.</p>
Kelly Alexander	<p>If the mask mandate is lifted and there are unvaccinated students in the school there should be an option for the other students who don't feel safe without a mask to do elearning from home. My daughter suffers from acute asthma and a safety needs to be provided if this is lifted</p>
Annie Millar	<p>Mandate got shut down. It's time to make the masks optional for all. This all is causing more harm then good.</p>
Heather Jurkowski	<p>I think masks should be optional.</p>
Andrew Hipp	<p>Our family (2 DGN students plus parents) strongly support continued wearing of masks and view masking as a science-supported, relatively undemanding way to decrease the rate of COVID transmission.</p>
Juliana Gornien	<p>I have many people close to me who are high risk and could be extremely effected if they were to contract Covid, including my partner. I am a student at DGN and should not have to worry about taking something home to those I love because other students do not want to wear a mask. I strongly support the current protocol as it helps to keep me and those I love safe and healthy. I urge the board to not sacrifice a safe environment for students because of backlash.</p>
Marie Mueller	<p>The mask mandate is what has allowed the school to have normal year of school this year with regular classes/lunch, sports, dances, afterschool activities, etc. For the most part, there have not disruptive amounts of staff or students out at once. We have been lucky (or smart) because many other school districts without mask mandates or don't enforce masks had significant disruptions in their school year with having to go remote over too many cases in the school at once or too many staff out with not enough substitutes to cover.</p> <p>We are still seeing at least 4000 to 5000 cases a day here in Illinois and our area is still at high transmission (the highest metric with). The under 20 years old demographic is the second highest group of cases in Illinois. I was proud District 99 was following science with the previous communication of following the metrics but I believe based on how other school districts caved, they will follow the loudest (but not the majority) of people because they are too weak to stand their ground. Please, be patient and give it a few weeks so we can get the case rates down and then lift the masks for all. This is too soon.</p>

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Charlotte Davis	Please remove the mask mandate. It should be individual choice. Please do not require vaccine for staff or students. Again that should be a decision to be made by parents in conjunction with their physicians. Please do not segregate students or staff that are not vaccinated in any manner. Do not bring our schools backward.
Lilly Roche	Our schools should not be taking away our right to protest in a respectful way. There are legal matters that have come to our school and the disrespect that people have given to the people with a different opinion. Both sides deserve their respect and the fact that administration can't even give it gives a poor example to the rest of the school.
Wesley Norkus	With the judges ruling rightly putting an end to the governor's overreach regarding the ridiculous mask mandate, who are you to overrule it and keep that illegal mandate intact...and then threaten those that are not abiding by the illegitimate mandate? The ruling does not say you cannot wear a mask. Students and their parents should have the authority over their personal health protection, not you!
Roy Houlahan	I'm asking that you remove the COVID mask mandate in our schools. Please leave the decision to getting or passing on the vaccine up to the student with their parent and their physician. Do not require a vaccine for student nor staff. Stop segregating non vaccinated students and staff.
Katie Kelly	<p>I am writing to ask for full transparency from District 99. Please have staff and parents vote for mask optional? I believe that most if not all with follow the majority.</p> <p>It has been well over a year since any type of vote or survey has gone out? Please help this community is so divided right now. I believe that some transparency from the district will help ease tensions.</p> <p>Thanks in advance, Katie Kelly Parent of 10th grader at Downers Grove South</p>
Rachel Kent Madison Akkawi	<p>No more masks! We are being denied the right to our education. Dr. Hank Thiele did not listen to us and we deserve the right to be heard. All of the injustice over the past week for us students has been ridiculous. WE NEED CHANGE. MAKE MASKS OPTIONAL. Thank you.</p>
Elizabeth Foreman	<p>District 99 BOE members,</p> <p>We are all disheartened that after two years, COVID is still detrimentally affecting all of us in so many ways. But I and so many others truly appreciate those who are working hard to provide the very best solutions to keeping people safe and healthy through vaccinations, testing and transparency and commitment to masking. The light is now at the end of the tunnel and if we continue to make the relatively small sacrifice of wearing masks perhaps a few months longer, the global pandemic will transition to become a safer and more manageable endemic and more normalcy can return.</p> <p>It is so important that the fragile ecosystem of our schools and the structure and wellbeing it provides for all is not sacrificed for comfort. Those most opposed to wearing masks are also less likely to be vaccinated and therefore likely to be hit hardest by Covid infections and spread them to others as well. Let's keep all the kids and staff safe.</p> <p>Our community's kids can connect, learn, grow, and thrive wearing masks — obviously, because they are already doing so. They need to stay in school, along with teachers, counselors, administrative staff, coaches and lunch staff, and at this point in time mask-wearing is still necessary to make this possible. It won't be forever, and hopefully it will only be necessary for a matter of months.</p> <p>Please stay the course on requiring mask wearing and keeping kids in school. Many thanks to all who are trying to keep our community's kids, teachers, administration, coaches, counselors, lunch staff, etc, safe and the daily routines intact to the extent possible.</p> <p>Sincerely, Elizabeth Foreman</p>

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Leigh Barbeau	<p>Thank you for continuing to keep the safety of students and teachers at the forefront of your decisions. Our family is grateful for all that the school district has done to keep delivering education during a very difficult time that has been plagued with tough decisions and new approaches for which no one had perfect answers. Issues of public health have been politicized, but we believe that the Board and the school staff and administration are doing their best to manage and sort through an ever changing environment. Since Spring 2020, none of the decisions that have been made have been easy. People need to be reminded that, if any of them were in similar positions of deciding on these issues, there would be people who agree and people who disagree. I am grateful that the Board continues to fall on the side of being slightly conservative when it comes to caring for the public health of their communities. Our family will happily continue to just follow the masking/vaccination protocols. When they are lifted, will we all be a bit happier? For sure. But until then, we will continue to tell our student to respect the rules, have care and concern for the general health of those around you and to show grace and kindness even to those who disagree with us. Modeling that set of attributes for our students is far more likely to educate them on how to successfully navigate adulthood than anything else. Thank you for receiving our comments.</p>
Alex Vergara	<p>How does the school board plan to depolarize our district 99 students? Given the current political climate, it would seem we're all more at-odds with each-other than ever before in history. How does the school board plan to take action against radical parents who plan to defy board rules, in pursuit of political "freedom."</p>
James Holecek	<p>The decision clearly applies to D99 as a defendant in the suit. If you don't follow the law you are exposing the taxpayers of D99 liability due to your inexcusable actions.</p>
Rebecca Adelman	<p>Enough. Whatever point it is that you are trying to prove was negated Thursday night, by the district 58 school board. If 5 year olds can go maskless, I'm quite sure a 15 year old can figure it out. This needs to end.</p>
Ryan Bottger	<p>The mask mandate needs to end immediately. District 99 needs to follow District 58's lead.</p>
Deb Davero	<p>Please stop this power struggle with the students and allow a balanced decision to emerge from Monday's board meeting by allowing masks be optional. Everyone wins in doing so... kids who aren't ready to unmask or are worried about a loved one ... can wear one. Those kids that are less fearful and comfortable with natural immunity (like the generations pre-Covid) and vaccination status be given the freedom of choice not wear one. Win win ... Teachers can have the same choice!</p> <p>We are asking for our civil rights to be respected and our freedom of choice be reinstated!</p> <p>Thank you</p>
Lora M Dominow	<p>It is time to make masks optional on schools, our children have suffered enough! You have the power and authority to end this, please make masks optional!</p>
Erin Lipka	<p>Mask Optional for all students and Staff! If not now then when? Is there ever going to be an end date for these masks? The time is now. Make way for other high schools and show them that its time to return back to normal.</p> <p>Thanks for taking the time for reading my feedback</p> <p>Sincerely, Erin Lipka</p>
Glenn Swenson	<p>I have let my wife take up issues with the district, but I just can't anymore. I have never seen my children the way they are now. They are worse off than the pandemic. This is truly unlawful what you are doing. They aren't protesting. They are going to school to get an education. That's all you need to do. This week for 4 days you did not keep them safe, provide any academics nor nurture or support. You ridiculed. You beat down. Used tactics to force submission of children wanting to get an education. All over a mask, which is a modified quarantine, completely useless, and unlawfully withheld an education from them. I am quite literally shocked. I am much quieter than my wife, but I can't stay quiet any longer. Please look around. Look at how much happier districts have become this week. Both teachers and students. Now that District 58 has made this decision, are you really going to make a student with younger siblings have a choice, but the older brother doesn't? Same virus. I know most of you either don't have kids, or don't even have any high school aged kids anymore, I don't feel you are qualified to fully understand what is going on. You are a bit out of touch for this specific issue. Those that choose to wear a mask certainly can. Please stop lying, manipulate and placing blame where it doesn't lay. The BOE and Mr. Thiele stop playing games. Give these kids a choice. All of you need to do the right thing immediately. Give the kids a choice! Tomorrow. Not next week, not next month tomorrow. Effective immediately.</p>

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Felicia Passini	Thank you for giving parents a place to share concerns. Please make masks optional. No mandates for Covid vaccines. No test to stay. No quarantine for close contact. Thank you.
Josh Passini	Thank you for allowing us to comment here. Please no test to stay. Covid vaccine optional, and mask optional.
Mark Fylling	My kids are in D58 and will be in D99 all in good time. Please take the same action as D58 did on 2/10 and go mask-optional for our kids.
Shantel Smith	Choose mask optional
Kyle W. Gansel	Now is the time to make masking recommended and not required like so many other surrounding districts have done.
Melanie Skrine	Time for masks to come off. Our kids have suffered long enough. If people are sitting in church, cafes, and other places WITHOUT masks, then students can sit in class without one too. This backward ideology has gone on far too long.
Holly Plys	Thank you for allowing public comment. The judge in the Sagamon County case allowed for ANY school districts in Illinois not already named in the case to be protected by that court case decision which was to NOT force any students to have to wear masks, be tested or vaccinated against their will. The case places a gag order on Governor Pritzker's ruling regarding masks in schools. Presently, any one who wants to be vaccinated or boosted, has already done so. Furthermore, after this winter, countless people regardless of mask wearing, vax or boosted status have gotten covid. If someone wants to mask, let them but make masks, tests and vax optional for those who do not want to do these things to their bodies. What happened to the saying, "My body, my choice?" It's okay for a pro choice abortion but not for anyone else? I respectfully ask the board to recommend the district to change the current mitigation status to MASK OPTIONAL. It is time to give the power of health and medical matters back to the parents, where it belongs. Please listen to your community, WE WANT A CHOICE. Please focus on education, and we will focus on all other matters as they pertain to our children. Please make masks optional. My daughter has a hard time breathing in her masks. The vaccine is out for those who are afraid of covid. If you are scared wear a mask. This needs to end it's been two years! First of all, thank you for all you have done to follow the science and implement effective mitigations to date to keep our teachers safe and children in school with sports, clubs, fine arts, and even dances! It has worked. These decisions are difficult, but cannot be based on who yells the loudest or stomps their feet the hardest. The science definitely proves this is a highly contagious airborne virus. We know how to reduce spread and quality masks does that effectively. We don't live in a single bubble, but in a community filled with all levels of health and wellness. We must protect each other. Please support continuing mask mandate at least until the transmission level is lower. Thank you
Erin Flinker	I support continuing to require masks in school until the end of the school year. Our District has been largely successful in navigating the virus for 2 years. Let's not quit now as we hopefully approach the finish line. Let's keep our students and staff safe. Other families do not have the "freedom to choose" to endanger my family's health. The Board could re-evaluate its position this summer regarding next school year based on conditions that exist this summer.
Julie Lemrise	Please make Downers Grove South HS mask optional. It's been two years. it is time for the students and families to make these decisions. Mask optional should begin immediately.
Lynn Zambreno	It is time for masks to be optional. Students haven't been wearing them properly the entire time anyway. At this point, this rule is disrupting education.
Jeff Miller	The data is out there. Just look around this country as well as the entire world. Many areas have either never worn masks at school (UK) or have done away with the school mask mandates (look at our surrounding Midwest states) with no significant damage or increase in numbers. Kids were never really at risk. Not to mention the CDC has even stated that the masks most of our children are wearing, do little to prevent the spread. We've done enough damage to our children. Please be part of the solution and not part of the problem. DG58 made the right decision, not it's time for DG99. At a minimum, masks should be optional. It's time for the hypocrisy to end!
Elizabeth Grogan	My husband and I would like to share our opinion about the a mask situation. We strongly believe that mask wearing should be optional at this time. Thank you!
Julie Rutkowski	
Karen Crowley	
April Wisch	

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Kara Janowiak	Hello. So far over 300+ schools in the state of IL (and even many surrounding DG in DuPage County) have gone mask-optional over the past week since Judge Grischow's TRO was issued February 4, 2022. Thursday evening (2/10/2022) during a D58 emergency school board meeting, mask-optional was voted on and passed, effective Monday 2/14/2022. If 5 year olds can have the option to go maskless, so, too, should 15 year olds et. al. Do the right thing.
Anna Wanderer	I have appreciated D99's mask policy and that it is tied to statistics relevant to our area, provided by the county health department. This is a common sense policy and has kept our students and staff safe at school. I ardently hope the school board will continue to adhere to this policy.
Joey Dean	I feel that students should have the choice whether or not they should wear a mask at school, but to those who don't want to wear a mask should be encouraged to wash hands and cover there mouth or nose if they need to sneeze or cough. The numbers are dropping, recently by nearly 70%, I think it's time that we can take our masks off.
Richard Sperando	It's time to remove the masks from our children's faces, like several other states' public schools and private schools in our own area have done for the past year. The data collected by our own CDC has shown no difference between the two. However, the studies done on the awful affect to our children's mental health, due to these masks is overwhelmingly clear. The benefits of wearing masks do not outweigh the risks of further damaging the minds of our children. From what I have read and been told, most of your teachers are vaccinated and supposedly (Per our medical experts) that lessens the blow of the disease for those individuals. So this is no longer about protecting the teachers and those most vulnerable, but in my opinion punishing those with the least risk of getting very sick or dying (OUR CHILDREN). Your Freshmen, Sophomores and most Juniors have no idea what a normal high school experience looks like, and will unfortunately have horrifying memories of the most important years of their lives. Our own government has finally realized we now have to adapt and live with this disease, like many others that preceded it. It makes no sense that I can be maskless eating in a restaurant, having a drink in a crowded bar, or celebrating spring break with thousands of people starting February 28th, but our children need to remain masked. Please, find the courage to put aside your own feelings and those of the teacher's union, and consider the well being of our most precious assets (OUR CHILDREN). On February 28th let's, TAKE OFF THE MASKS!!!!
Jill Izzo	Thank you for allowing me to voice my opinion on this very important topic. If you want to continue keeping children masked in Illinois despite the TRO and Governor's lifting of the mandate, please explain the danger. What are we protecting them from? This is not an emergency. We have vaccines. The actions of District 99 seem to show no faith in the protocols they are enforcing. We as parents have slowly become aware of the toll the Covid mitigation has taken on our kids. It's a much deeper issue that can be stated here but there are plenty of studies and articles describing what has happened to kids and adults. In my experience, my already anxious friends felt a strong desire to follow the Covid rules and found it easy because they did exactly what their anxiety was telling them. This will persist as long as we continue to post tragic Covid stories giving these anxious people more reason to keep hiding. This is not an emergency. We have vaccines. We have masks. My daughter has a severe peanut and tree nut allergy. If she accidentally eats this, she could die. Does the District want to ban nuts from school for her? Boy, that would be great, she would feel so much better. Except that when some other kid who eats it for breakfast could take a sip from a water fountain and my daughter could go to that water fountain next. It's impossible to avoid. She takes her precautions and lives her life. Time for everyone to do the same.
Holly Pappas	Please keep the mask mandate in place according to the original plan. Covid transmission is still high and not enough students are vaccinated yet. At risk students and teachers shouldn't have to be exposed just because a few people aren't comfortable wearing masks. At least wait to find out the courts decision on the appeal before lifting the mask requirement. I work in an office that requires masks and we have been told that even when the mask mandate is lifted, unvaccinated employees will still be required to wear masks. I think unvaccinated students and staff should be required to wear masks regardless of the decision. Thank you
Gina Cecchi	At this point, I am in support of mask optional. It should be a family decision. Vaccines are available and many of the students have had Covid recently. I have a child in 58 and would like both districts to be aligned.
Gary Bakker	Masks will become optional soon. You can stop the fighting and the disruption by making that official Monday night. The sooner we can move past this issue, the better for all, including our children so that they can get back to learning. Thank you.

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Kevin Crowley	<p>On Monday, I'd like the board to explain their position as to why they are ignoring a courts ruling regarding masks, close contacts and testing for the unvaccinated. What is the legal reason as to why District 99 doesn't have to abide by the ruling.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Jelena Pesovic	<p>It is time for our kids to go back to normal life. Nothing will be like pre-Covid but mask optional would make their life close to normal and easier. I am hopeful that you would do what is right for our kids. Let them see smiles on their friends and teachers faces. Thank you</p>
Tom Onusaitis	<p>It is time to end mask mandates in District 99. They are ending or have already been ended all around the country outside of this school district. Children in school are not a demographic that has serious problems in any significant numbers with the COVID virus. Adult teachers and staff in District 99 are well over 90% vaccinated and, in theory, are protected from serious illness. Plus, the CDC revised their position a few weeks ago and stated that the typical masks that the vast majority of people are wearing don't stop the virus from spreading anyway. Masking has gone on long enough, end it already! You have the power, show some leadership and return our kids to normalcy at school.</p>
Michael Rimkus	<p>What is your strategy to get the students back to normal? Why can parents go out to restaurants and bars with complete strangers and not wear masks, but students have to wear them when they are with the same people everyday. Students are able to gallivant around during lunch without masks on, talking to friends, joking around, but have to wear them in the classroom in their assigned seat? Please tell us what your plan is to return back to normal? Thank you.</p>
Dana Cox	<p>Please make masks optional. Many kids will still wear them, but you must allow them the choice. Denying students their civil rights is against the law.</p>
Kay	<p>This board is a joke. Kids can go to sporting events and concerts unmasked. You are slowly killing our kids, hope that makes you happy. None of you have any clue what you are continually doing to these students. You must be paid by Jelly Belly. Glad my kid is out of this district soon. WOULD NOT refer anyone to attend 99.</p>
Jen Williams	<p>Masks should be made optional. This should be a family decision based on what's best for each family. Not mandated. Let's get back to providing a normal school day to our kids.</p> <p>The same applies to getting vaccinated. This is a personal choice and there should not be any discrimination against kids who opt not to get vaccinated. School rules & policies should be the same for all kids regardless of vaccination status.</p>
Kate Benton	<p>I'm writing to express my strong conviction that it's time for district 99 to go mask optional. The district is in violation of the TRO as one of the names school districts. The litigation is concerning but regardless, the kids need to get back to normal. Those who want to mask can continue to do so. Parents have the right to have a choice in these health-related decisions. Enough is enough. Please vote to go mask optional for district 99. It is the right thing to do, and it is time!</p>
Dawn Jovic (I would not like my name to be publicly read)	<p>I agree with the current board approved plan that masks will become optional when the transmission rate for our community becomes "low". The positivity rate and number of cases is coming down quickly so I would prefer to wait a few more weeks before implementing the mask optional plan. I would not appreciate the board changing their current plan that was based on expert research just because they received push back from parents and students. These families have been protesting the science for the entire pandemic. If it were up to them we would have never taken any safety precautions. We need to listen to the experts and be patient for a few more short weeks.</p>
Trish Axelson	<p>I would appreciate your consideration of making masks optional for the students. Thank you.</p>
Kevin Echols	<p>It is long past time to end this nonsense. Our children are suffering because the school is afraid of political pressure. Kids are done. Parents are done. Do the right thing. There is a court order in place that you should be following. Instead you now want to claim our kids are absent without excuse?? That's ridiculous. You are treating these children unfairly. If this continues, myself and many others are preparing to take legal action. And you can certainly believe that we will all be more involved in the election process than ever before. You are supposed to be trustworthy individuals that we can rely on to do go for our children. Instead you're acting like political skills. Enough is enough</p>
Mina Carey Rodriguez	<p>Thank you for the leadership and commitment you have demonstrated at the height of the pandemic and now. It is a challenging environment in which to make decisions, weighing the information and evidence. I so appreciate the steady and measured approach the Board has taken thus far. That 95% of students, the teachers and staff are abiding by the rules shows we will bear with the measures, so students can learn in-person, until the Board decides the data and science justify a change in policy.</p>
Daniel Michalski	<p>This mask mandate needs to be removed from all schools. Only 95 masks help stop Covid spread. So if you are willing to pass them out for free masking otherwise is useless. Vaccination or unvaccinated don't care kids are less likely to catch Covid and you are pushing a political agenda on my child.</p>

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Julie Botlger	<p>I'm speaking for hundreds of parents and students who want masking to be optional but fear repercussions and scrutiny in the community. Please let families choose. Our children's mental health depends on it. Thank you.</p>
Allison Folkerts	<p>Please make masks optional for D99 students. Masking is not without risk or harm to our students, and at this point the risk of continuing these mitigation measures outweigh the benefits. For those that feel as though removing the masks during school hours will increase their risk of being infected with SARS-CoV-2 to a level that they are uncomfortable with, encourage them to "follow the science": wear a high quality N95/K95 mask to prevent exposure to the virus and get vaccinated/boosted to decrease their risk of hospitalization and death in the event they do become infected with the virus.</p> <p>I encourage the board to not wait for our local and state health departments to update their guidance before moving forward. They have failed to produce data-driven, timely recommendations for our schools throughout the entire pandemic. Their recommendations, and the timing of the recommendations they make, are often in the best interests of our politicians and not our children. Please put our children first, and remove the mask mandate for D99.</p>
Andrea Conley	<p>I'm hopeful that District 99 will move to a "mask optional" policy for students starting as soon as possible. After nearly 2 years of COVID-19 precautions and mitigations, it is time for our students to move on. I believe that students and parents should be making the choice for students at this time. Thank you.</p>
Andreas Kroschke	<p>I urge the board to remove all current Covid restrictions and in particular the dehumanizing practice of muzzling our children with masks. Thousands of school districts around the country have lifted mask mandates effective with the beginning of this school year and there is ZERO EVIDENCE that the health of the children in these districts were in any way compromised after ending the mandates. Contrary to what our Governor suggests, not a single school district in this country had to close their doors after making masks optional. At this point there is no credible scientific justification for prolonging the mask mandates. On the other hand there is overwhelming scientific, peer reviewed studies proving that masks are detrimental to the psychological well being of our students and that prolonged mask wearing does in fact lead to oxygen deprivation which in itself can be a serious health hazard.</p> <p>With most of the schools in the US successfully operating with no restrictions for the entire school year how can this board still use any medical justification for not lifting the mandates? More and more parents and students are beginning to understand that we are one of the few districts in the nation who are still subjecting our children to this physical abuse. At this late stage of the pandemic it is pretty obvious to most people that prolonging the mask mandates in schools while the rest of the state is allowed to go mask optional for all indoor spaces has absolutely nothing to do with science. I don't know what the political motivation is behind the governor's latest unlawful mandate but our students seem to be trapped in the middle of a political agenda that has no medical justification.</p> <p>May I remind all of you that you took an oath of office to be on this board and part of that oath is to protect the right of these children under the law. The law in IL and many other states has made it clear that governors or any government agencies do not have the legal authority to impose mask or vaccine mandates in schools and if schools continue to enforce these unlawful restrictions this may very well expose them to be held accountable for violating the law. I can promise you that several parents including myself are looking at several options to take whatever legal means necessary to end this abuse of our children with these dehumanizing masks.</p> <p>I have no ill will towards any board member or the superintendent but I will no longer allow you to violate my children's basic human right to breathe freely especially not knowing that these masks have been scientifically proven to be more harmful than useful.</p> <p>Please protect these children from further abuse. They deserve better.</p>
Brian Kittinger	<p>I would like to encourage the board to continue with their current policy of masks being mandatory during a high or substantial number of cases. I agree that there will come a time when masks can be optional, which hopefully will be soon, but now is not the time. Thank you for your continued efforts to best serve ALL students and staff of D99.</p>

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<p>Andreas Kroschke</p>	<p>This is a repeat post removing language that could potentially have removed this comment from public record:</p> <p>I urge the board to remove all current Covid restrictions and in particular the demeaning practice of muzzling our children with masks. Thousands of school districts around the country have lifted mask mandates effective with the beginning of this school year and there is ZERO EVIDENCE that the health of the children in these districts were in any way compromised after ending the mandates. Contrary to what our Governor suggests, not a single school district in this country had to close their doors after making masks optional. At this point there is no credible scientific justification for prolonging the mask mandates. On the other hand there is overwhelming scientific, peer reviewed studies proving that masks are detrimental to the psychological well being of our students and that prolonged mask wearing does in fact lead to oxygen deprivation which in itself can be a serious health hazard.</p> <p>With most of the schools in the US successfully operating with no restrictions for the entire school year how can this board still use any medical justification for not lifting the mandates? More and more parents and students are beginning to understand that we are one of the few districts in the nation who are still subjecting our children to this physical abuse. At this late stage of the pandemic it is pretty obvious to most people that prolonging the mask mandates in schools while the rest of the state is allowed to go mask optional for all indoor spaces has absolutely nothing to do with science. I don't know what the political motivation is behind the governor's latest unlawful mandate but our students seem to be trapped in the middle of a political agenda that has no medical justification.</p> <p>May I remind all of you that you took an oath of office to be on this board and part of that oath is to protect the right of these children under the law. The law in IL and many other states has made it clear that governors or any government agencies do not have the legal authority to impose mask or vaccine mandates in schools. Hence schools are enforcing mandates that government officials have no legal authority to impose in the first place.</p> <p>As a parent I reserve the right to protect my children from harm and I firmly object to this school district violating the basic human right of my children to breathe freely especially knowing that these masks have been scientifically proven to be more harmful than useful.</p> <p>Please protect these children from further abuse. They deserve better.</p>
<p>Jen Adelman-McCarthy</p>	<p>Please continue to comply with CDC recommendations on COVID protocol. We need our students to understand the science behind doing so. There will be a time that we can safely go back to no masks, and not social distancing, and that time, if we continue to move in the right direction with vaccinations etc isn't that far out. Teaching our students to make the best choices we can based upon the scientific evidence in front of us, and reviewing that evidence is the best way that not only an we protect ourselves now. But educate our students to be good citizens in the future. This will help students to understand that the science they are learning, isn't just something that they can forget when they leave school, but that they will continue to use the scientific method throughout their lives to make educated decisions.</p>
<p>Paula Riehle</p>	<p>It is shocking that our district is continuing to participate in a fraud that is DAMAGING our children. The longer you perpetuate this fraud, the more you not only harm our kids, but you are doing incredible damage to your personal reputations. Is this the legacy you want to leave? That you were too afraid to stand up for what is right? Unmask our kids and end all Covid restrictions immediately. Shameful!</p>
<p>Dan Kardatzke</p>	<p>Thank you to the board and administration for all the hard work you've done this year balancing all the varying opinions and measures to battle COVID in District 99. You've been clear with the plan all year and unfortunately now you have been put in a tough position with the recent ruling. However, I also feel this is an opportunity to take a step forward and remove the mask requirements. You reach a point where you've done all you can and at this point, those that are unvaccinated are not going to change and those that are vaccinated (like my family) now feel safe enough for the mitigations to go away. The only factor that would make me feel otherwise would be an overwhelming support from teachers to keep the mask requirements in place as I will always defer to the teachers and administration on what's right to keep our kids safe. I believe now is a time to make a change if it has the support of the staff as well. Thanks for your time and consideration and I will support any decision you reach and will reinforce with my two DGS students as well.</p>

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<p>Pamela Harkness</p>	<p>I don't understand why the students are being punished or penalized? Our kids want their social freedom back! They've been through ENOUGH! I'm not against Masks, but they should be optional. Please reconsider this policy it's causing unnecessary resentment and stress!</p>
<p>Ana Guido</p>	<p>I know you are all in a difficult place... an di appreciate you taking the time to listen, however please know we the parents will continue to stand up for freedom of choice. It has been 695+ days since that freedom was stripped from our children and our community. We have been "flexible" and understanding all the way through. Our children have lost so much along the way, and we are done with the inconsistencies, decisiveness, unscientific decisions, stressful environment and barbaric treatment of our students. We are done with accepting your politics and will not allow this to be the norm as you continue to try and find "clarity". Please HELP OUR CHILDREN!!! BE THEIR VOICE.</p> <p>I believe you will do the right thing and allow our children to return to normalcy allowing them freedom of choice.</p> <p>Sincerely, One exhausted mom</p>
<p>Laura Wachowski</p>	<p>Please stop acting like victims and start acting like humanity matters. You are not acting in the best interest of the humans you share the space with. You are not victims, etc etc</p>
	<p>I'm a parent of current D58 students, future DGN students.</p> <p>Please give D99 students CHOICE. Make MASKS OPTIONAL.</p>
<p>Juliette Freyer</p>	<p>The rules, guidelines and regulations of IDPH and ISBE that you have followed thus far are antiquated and have NOT caught up to the current state of Covid. They do not accurately reflect the many options we now have to prevent and treat this illness.</p> <p>Please take this courageous step forward. Do not stay in this realm of fear. Please listen to your community. Please vote to MAKE MASKS RECOMMENDED, and not required.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
<p>Laura Musgravess</p>	<p>I will not be able to attend the Board of Education meeting, so I would like to express my SUPPORT for District 99 CONTINUING its current procedures requiring masks at school. Covid-19 and its variants still permeate our community and I feel strongly that schools are not safe to remove mask requirements. Unmasking is a political stunt, not a responsible response to scientifically-approved mitigations in the face of a GLOBAL PANDEMIC. I beg of District 99 not to fall into the hysteria of unmasking for political reasons or simply because people don't like to wear them. Once Covid-19 becomes a small part of our daily lives, District 99 can revisit these procedures, but NOW is not the time. One last comment: there are reports of violence in other school districts against students who wear masks. This is while asks are still required! What threats will my children face when the mask mandate is removed, and they still choose to wear masks to school (as my children will do)? it's another factor for the school district to consider. Thank you for listening.</p>
<p>Heather Peterson</p>	<p>Masking should be a choice. FOLLOW the actual science!</p>
<p>Amy Laverty</p>	<p>The fact that parents and students have to fight the powers that be to have a mask optional protocol is appalling. A lawsuit had to be filed and over 140 school districts were named in the TRO that was granted last week. The fact that over half the country has had mask optional in place for school settings for weeks (or months) makes the political game that administrators and politicians are playing here in Illinois a completely disgusting show of control for their own benefit. Please give the citizens their choice back and please follow your own advice by following science. Thank you.</p>
<p>Amy Nemeth</p>	<p>Please consider moving to mask optional. Vaccines are widely available. States with more tolerant mask policies have no different outcomes than Illinois. Covid strains are less virulent. The children deserve to have the option to not wear masks. They have been resilient long enough.</p>

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	<p>I support ending mask and quarantine requirements at the district. Our community is highly vaccinated and bears an additional level of natural immunity. Individuals are able to easily obtain N95 masks which offer protection to the wearer.</p> <p>Additionally, my children hate wearing masks. My son with autism has regressed with pronunciation. It is not natural for children to spend 7-8 hours not seeing their peers or teachers faces.</p> <p>Lastly, even with good intentions, humans are not wearing masks properly. I personally have witnessed such unsanitary use of the face coverings including at a DGS swim meet. The boys were required to wear them in between heats. They would hang them on the starting block, sometimes drop them then put them back on their face. It was the most ridiculous display of a "safety" mitigation I have ever seen.</p> <p>Psychologically I think we have damaged ourselves enough. It is time to move on, live with what's left of the virus and remove these divisive measures that are hurting our community more than the pandemic itself. Families and friends have been torn apart. District 99 has the opportunity to remove a piece of the division and allow us to start healing.</p>
Jen Meggos	<p>It is time to go mask optional. Per the CDC, the masks offer little protection against the spread of our current variant. As we have learned and continue to learn, our children have far greater risks coming from mask use vs benefit. Mental issues have greatly increased for our teens- suicide, drug overdose far larger issue than Covid. For those with learning and social challenges, mask wearing has been detrimental. These children are unable to hear masked teachers or be heard clearly by teachers or peers, unable to see facial expressions to gain social understanding, build connections with teachers and peers, all of which impacts learning, social emotional health, and confidence. My daughters started high school in this pandemic. An already nerve racking time was made more so by not seeing a friendly smile from a staff member ever. One staff member acknowledged the challenges of mask wearing in his students' abilities to understand his teaching style as well as he learn more about our children. Fear of a much less severe outcome virus must no longer paralyze our schools and community. With vaccines widely available, masks an option for those who feel necessary, it is time to move forward for the well being of our children. Our governor will soon take the mask mandate off of the entire state, yet no end in sight for our schools. No science or logic is being used for this decision. Time for D99 to use critical thinking, stop making our children be the ones carrying this burden when they are least at risk with Covid and suffering silently behind their mask. It is time to do what is right - give our families and children a mask option.</p>
Ryan Stopka	<p>\Dear School Board members, I would like you to reconsider your current position on the mask mandate in our schools. I believe we should be allowed to choose whether we wear a mask or not. The number of Covid cases and hospitalizations are down. Studies show that cloth masks have little effect on Covid Case loads (see New York Times). We face greater risks in our daily life than we do from Covid-19. What we ARE experiencing is a dramatic increase in mental health issues because of the Covid mitigations being forced upon us. Studies by Johns Hopkins are showing that cloth masks are ineffective protection against Covid anyway. (The majority of students at DGN wear cloth or disposable masks) With the availability of N95 masks and vaccines, there is no reason to mandate masks wearing in school. Anyone can choose to wear a mask if they want, but we should also have the choice to not wear a mask if we feel comfortable. I moved to Downers Grove my sophomore year and the majority of my time here has been spent either online learning or behind a mask. I WANT TO SEE MY CLASSMATES' SMILES! I WANT TO SEE MY PEERS' FACES! I don't want to hide my smile behind a mask any longer! District 58 is allowing masks to be optional. If the younger kids in our town are viewed as being smart enough to make an intelligent decision about their own bodies, shouldn't we be allowed that same choice? It's disrespectful and demeaning if you think we are not able to make this decision and the younger kids are. I have three months left at DGN before I graduate and I want to make the most of it and end my time here in a normal way - not hiding behind an ineffective mask. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE change your opinion and allow masks to be optional at DGN and DGS effective immediately. Thank you for listening to me.</p> <p>Ryan Stopka</p>

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<p>Tracy Driscoll</p>	<p>As a parent of two former district 99 students, I am writing to implore you to make masks optional in our district. Other districts throughout Illinois have lead the way in this new policy throughout the past week. Please recognize that Governor Pritzker's mask mandate for school age children does not follow any current science that we have learned over the past two years. Both students and staff have a right high rate of vaccination in our district. This is one of the reasons governor Pritzker cited to keep the mask mandate in place. Additionally, masks have been found to be ineffective especially with the occurrence of the Omicron variant, which has been Transmissible even with masks. This age group continues to be at a very low risk of extreme illness especially with this new variant. Each family and young adult should be able to assess the risk to their families and themselves and determine whether or not to wear an effective mask at school going forward. Students can move forward and continue to respect each other's choices. If you continue with this mask mandate this continues to be a divisive policy with a negative impact to our whole student body. Many schools have made masks optional over several weeks and some even this past year. There has not been an increased occurrence of transmitted Covid cases. Our superintendent and board of education needs to prove that it can be more agile in this ever changing landscape. The children who need these precious four years to develop into independent, confident adults are losing precious time being covered with masks and unable to express themselves. Just as you treated the children as adults with regard to explicit material in the library, please give these families and young adults a chance to assess their own risk and to choose.</p>
<p>William Flinker</p>	<p>Please end the mask mandate immediately and return the freedom of choice to our young adults</p>
<p>Jamey Guido</p>	<p>Dear School Board of Education, And I quote : "While the restraining order can only presently be enforced against school districts named as defendants in the case, as to the students named as plaintiffs, the judge ruled as a general matter that school districts must provide due process of law to students before mandating mask or exclusion policies. Her ruling puts all school districts, and their staff, on notice as to the illegality of their policies. Any school district continuing to enforce these illegal policies after her ruling are exposing their district, board members, administrators, and teachers to potential significant financial risk. Civil rights claims for knowingly violating constitutionally protected rights would possibly not be covered by the schools insurance policy leaving the district, board members, administrators and teachers personal assets exposed. Knowingly violating due process rights is a serious issue. This is why almost 300 districts in the state have switched to fully mask optional policies and abandoned vaccination/testing policies on their own volition. Their lawyers assuredly advised them of these risks. It's possible you may be continuing with these illegal policies in hopes that the appellate court disagrees with the trial court, but that is a serious gamble, because if you are wrong, I am putting you on notice right now that the district as well as every board member, administrator, and teacher involved, is going to be sued by me for civil rights violations against my children." (T. Devore)</p> <p>We are seeking for the BOE to do what is right by our children.</p> <p>They need their education, and freedom of choice. If we want to talk science, all those kids who choose to wear a mask can do so , as that is their choice, we respect that... however we should be given the same respect.</p> <p>Sincerely, Jamey</p>

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Hello, my name is Marc Allen, my wife Barbara and I have 4 children. Our daughter Emily is a Junior at Downers Grove North. I grew up in Downers Grove and graduated from Downers Grove North. We decided to raise our family because we think Downers Grove is a great, well-rounded community.

Thank you for taking time to read and consider my comments. I am recommending Downers Grove district 99 proceed to masks optional. We need to start learning to live with COVID and placing importance on the mental wellbeing of all children. Here is why:

1. Mental Wellbeing: My daughter is 17 and wearing a mask has been emotionally draining on her. It has caused her to be less motivated in school, more withdrawn, irritable, frustrated, and anxious. Her mental wellbeing, as well as my family's mental wellbeing is critically important and as parents, we should be able to make the choice if our children should wear a mask or not.

2. What Goal Are we trying to Achieve: The question I ask is what are we trying to achieve with the mask mandate in schools? Are we trying to eliminate the spread of COVID? That's not happening. Are we trying to protect the most vulnerable? Then why not use focused strategies to protect those individuals? Schools in states without mask mandates are not experiencing higher levels of COVID. When you make masks optional there is not a greater risk to students or the community, we communities already doing it!

Marc Allen

3. The Science supports it: When you objectively review the science the simple facts is; kids and young adults are at minimal risk. Vaccines are widely available. The most vulnerable children and adults should have a protection strategy to protect their individual risk. The need to get back to normal is critically important for the wellbeing of our children and all of us. Please read the statement by scientist and doctors I believe is one of the most well written, levelheaded approaches I've ever seen.
<https://www.urgencyofnormal.com/our-statement>

As members of the school board, you have the great privilege to make decisions that support our school and our community. The best decision for our school and our community is one that moves towards a path to normalcy. The first step in that is to make masks optional.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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	<p>Dear Board Members,</p> <p>I am writing to encourage you to follow the legal ruling on the TRO that passed on Friday, Feb. 4 and allow our students to exercise their legal right to chose whether to mask. Given that no states in our region have school mask mandates and that over 400 schools/school districts have gone mask optional as of February 9, 2022, I think it is clear that it is both safe and necessary to do so. The covid pandemic has been mild for those under 20 years of age in terms of the disease but has been devastating to them emotionally, mentally, and cognitively for several reasons. Thankful we have been back to full inperson learning which has been a big improvement. However, the mask wearing also has more negative consequences for the children than it does benefit. The mask make communicating, hearing and being heard, difficult and therefore endangers learning. In addition, social and emotional development has been hampered due to the lack of ability to read facial expressions. These are just the learning related consequences.</p> <p>As Hank Thiele told the DGN students on Wednesday February 9th, there are studies which have determine that masking as we do it is ineffective. I urge you to peruse the following article which provides an overview of the evidence and studies on the efficacy of face masks, https://swprs.org/face-masks-and-covid-the-evidence/.</p> <p>The failure to change this policy has cause much strife in our schools. Bullying and harassment are rampant both in person and online. Those who choose to exercise their legal right receive quite a daily dose of hate. They have been given an inadequate education this week as the district is legally required to provide. There have been incidents of verbal intimidation by school staff. Improper provision of food and drink early on and overly strict bathroom policies. As I have shared with friends and family around the Chicago area and the country, the experiences my son has had this past week have left them speechless. Many have encouraged me to go to the authorities or seek legal representation.</p> <p>Whether intended or not, as this information flows out to the personal contacts of parents and students in the area and as media gets increasingly involved (AM560 and NBC), the reputation of District 99, its administration, board, and our town is quickly loosing esteem. These things can be made right.</p> <p>I urge you at the next board meeting to look at the law and the data I have referenced and talk to some of the non-masked students to learn of their experiences. I have frankly been broken hearted at the way some members of our community, especially the adults, have treated others. I sincerely hope this was just due to a crazy mixed up time and difficulty planning. If not, then the time when I can leave this community cannot come soon enough.</p> <p>Respectfully, Beth Bakker</p>
Nenad Lazic	You need to make mask optional now. If you follow the science as you say you do than do it now. Do not follow the politics and do it later. Our kids need to be unmasked NOW. Look at 58 true leaders for our kids.
Violet Branko	Please make mask optional. I'm a grandma and I believe that children deserve to be free. Enough is enough. Do it NOW. Thank you.

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	<p>Hello District 99 Board of Education. I currently have 1 child, a junior at DGN. Another who graduated from DGN last year and 2 children at District 58. I was at the district 58 board meeting and the momentum and feelings were clear. Parents and families want the option to mask their kids. The board of district 58 listened to the parents and did what is right for the kids, I hope you will do the same.</p> <p>Districts across the state and across the country are overwhelmingly moving toward mask optional for the health and safety of our children. So I ask you, if we don't give the students of district 99 the choice to unmask now, then when? What difference will a week, or a month make in at this point? None. We are well into our 3rd school year of living with the devastating effects covid-19 mandates have placed on our children. The evidence is overwhelmingly clear, covid-19 is in its endemic stage, it is more contagious, but less virulent. It is a FACT that high school students are at very low risk serious illness, and the concerns of the social impact, mental state and suicide are the much greater concerns.</p> <p>For those in the community who have health concerns, a properly-fitted N95 is highly effective at protecting the wearer and does not rely on the behavior of others around you for protection. High-quality one-way masking is more effective at protecting the vulnerable than universal use of low-quality masks.</p> <p>The IDPH and CDC are talking out of two sides of their mouth. Open society but keep masks on at school. This makes no sense. Please do not make the mistake of fostering division like our neighbors at districts 86 and 203. it's time to heal. it's time to move on. I implore you to give the students of district 99 the choice and VOTE TO END THE MASK MANDATE POLICY.</p> <p>Please read this very well written guide for tools to return to normal from a well respected team of scientists and doctors. https://www.urgencyofnormal.com/our-statement</p> <p>Thank you, Barbara Allen</p>
Kevin	<p>Change your current policy to mask OPTIONAL. You are hurting the students, dividing the teachers.</p> <p>I have been working in healthcare for over 20 years including in the accreditation of hospitals. I believe in science and wearing masks is about risk reduction not complete elimination. I believe we need to do our part to protect ourselves as well as others around us and encourage the continuation of masks.</p> <p>I am a long hauler who is still dealing with medical issues from November 2020. I also have colleagues who are dealing with similar long hauler issues. We need to help protect each other and masks is a simple way to help reduce everyone's rest if worn properly. As I mentioned before I am still dealing with longhailer issues including permanent damage to my lungs on top of having mild asthma. I have no issue working a long day at the hospital while wearing a mask. Therefore my child and others at Downers Grove South should be able to handle this simple task. My family as well as my Downers Grove South high school student are in full support of continuing to wear masks.</p>
Kathy Tolomeo	

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<p>Dear District 99 Board of Education Members,</p> <p>My wife and I are writing this letter to encourage you to support "Mask Optional" for our high schools. For the past two years, wearing a mask for a minimum of 7 hours a day (and more if you add in extracurricular activities) has taken a toll on our childrens' mental health. They are suffering silently in a significant way under this mandate. Here are some the reasons why to consider it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The science has changed and is also telling us that this virus is "here to stay". 3. We have high vaccination rates and many people have been infected despite this and more than once. * Our kids are vaccinated, have been wearing masks and still contracted COVID and some got it twice. 4. Sports Arenas like the Bulls that have 30,000 people in close contact, going to packed bars restaurants, parties, kids sports tournaments have "Mask Optional": It doesn't sense that our kids are in school with mandatory Masks. Make them optional as the rest of society around them and District 58 where their brothers and or sisters go! 6. Governor Pritzker announced that he will lift the mandate but left it in place for schools. These schools have kids in the same class all day. It is not what our high school kids do. They move around from class to class every hour or so. 7. Fourteenth Amendment: Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." 9. And finally – by applying all the information to which you have access, show us that you are willing to apply the knowledge rather than take an easy way out. Show us that you have the leadership and are willing to build trust with the members of your community. <p>I hope you consider and vote to lift the mandate or make "Masks Optional".</p> <p>Thank you, Waqas Akkawi Chief Information Security Officer & Data Protection Officer</p>	<p>As a 20 year resident of Downers Grove and a parent of 2 District 99 students, I am asking you to make masks optional for the students in District 99.</p> <p>The 14th Amendment clearly states that no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. The requirement of our children to wear masks in school violates the 14th Amendment.</p> <p>There was, and is, a time and place for pandemic restrictions. But when they were put in, it was always with the understanding that they would be removed as soon as we can. And, in this case, circumstances have changed. Case counts are declining. Also, the science has changed,</p> <p>The Governor of the State of Illinois has announced the roll back of mask mandates for the State of Illinois effective February 28th. Although he has left the mask mandate in place for schools it is important to note that these are primary schools where children stay in one place all day. District 99 students, in contrast, move around every 50 minutes.</p> <p>Please vote tonight to remove the requirement of masks in District 99 schools and extracurricular activities.</p> <p>I am in favor of choice! It is time to drop the mandatory masks these kids have been through enough and it is time to see their faces. At this point after wearing them for so long they are causing more harm than good. As adults it is our responsibility to look after the welfare of our children and parents have the right to make those decisions for their children. America is about freedom and freedom of choice to decide for ourselves if we should wear a mask or not. Please do the right thing and give the choice back to the families, our right to decide, our choice! Unmask our children</p> <p>I hope you will allow masks to be optional immediately. Thank you.</p>
<p>Jennifer Kozak</p>	
<p>Erica Rausch</p>	
<p>Tara</p>	

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Carol Victorin	Remove the mask mandate at school for the students and teachers.
Amy Mordaunt	Please keep all our children safe. Please continue to enforce the use of masks in district 99. Masks are proven to help prevent the spread of covid.
Greg Mordaunt	Please continue to enforce the use of masks to prevent the spread of covid in our schools.
Victoria Lucadello	Mask optional please
Danielle Lucadello	Mask optional
Karen Schmidt	Mask optional immediately!
Dawn Matune	I am writing in support to make D99 MASK OPTIONAL effective IMMEDIATELY. It is time to stop living in a social experiment with our kids suffering in immeasurable ways. It is time to start a civil return to normal respecting individual choice. Those who wish to remain single, double or even triple masked may do so with vaccines and boosters. Forced masked mandates have no place in IL schools, and hundreds of districts are switching for the good of the children. Will you find the strength to right the current wrong and go mask optional effective immediately?
Jennifer Lockwood	Please consider IMMEDIATE end to masking for our students. Schools across our county, state and country have been unmasking. Most schools outside of IL have been mask optional all year and have not seen any greater increase in transmission numbers than ours. Mask recommended/optional allows students and parents the right to chose what is best for them. These children have been so resilient and have been through so much these past two years - please allow them to see faces of friends, teachers, coaches. Students are struggling with not being able to hear and/or communicate with teachers and classmates. They are not making the connections they should be because they can not see smiles, expressions, FACES. District 58 has put a great plan in place for mask recommended/optional - which goes into place this Monday, 2/14. These are the same families in our community. District 99 should be able to offer the choice to students and families as well. Thank you.
Gary S Bakker	Please vote for mask optional! Its time to move past the mask mandate. Thank you.
Akiko Momozaki	I think it's time to go back to normal. At the very least, I'd like to see the same mitigation measures as in District 58.
Matthew Stopka	Hello, my name is Matthew Stopka. My younger brother is a senior at DGN. I am writing to ask you to reconsider your current position on the mask mandate in school. I feel bad for my brother and his classmates. I can't imagine having to wear a mask ALL DAY. He goes to school at 8am and has class all day and then practice right after school. So he is wearing a mask for 9 hours. He gets a break at lunch because they don't have to wear their masks when they are eating - which is kind of funny because they all sit right next to each other (no social distancing) and eat and drink without a mask, yet you all expect them to sit socially distanced in their classrooms with a mask on. That makes no sense to me. I understand that teachers and administrators are not required to wear a mask in certain areas of the school - that seems rather hypocritical does it not? Over 500 schools in the state of Illinois have made masks optional. No one is asking you to take away the option of wearing a mask, just allow the students and their families a choice. My brother is 18 years old. He is old enough to vote and fight in a war, but you don't think he (and my parents) are wise enough to decide whether or not to wear a mask at school. How do you justify this kind of thinking? We all know the current cases of Covid 19 are rapidly declining. We also know that vaccines are readily available for high school aged students. And N95 masks are also readily available. There is no reason to keep this mask mandate in D99.
Ryan Dennison	We have gone too long wearing masks. As a student that has dealt with social anxiety and mental health problems I would love to return to normal and as well as many of my classmates. A bunch of other districts in Illinois and in other states have gone mask optional. They are staying mask optional for a reason. If it didn't work wouldn't you think they would go back to mandatory masking?

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Nicole Chavez	<p>Enough is enough with masks! With all due respect, school boards are made to represent the community's voice in public education, providing us citizens and stakeholders governance and knowledge of the community's resources and needs. This is not being done! We as parents are tired of our children being used as political pawns. We know the "science" and what is needed and NOT needed. As part of many social media groups, I can assure you that there are thousands of people in the area that are fed up. We want to be afforded the freedom to make choices for our own families. It has already been approved in so many other districts so whatever point the board is trying to make has been negated by all those schools and the thousands around the country that haven't had any covid restrictions since the beginning. I would highly suggest that the board start listening to us parents and the public when making your decisions because people are already discussing elections and the need to elect in those that actually represent us in the area.</p>
Vince Davero	<p>I believe that it should be mask optional because we have been in masks for the past 2 years. We are one of very few states that still have a mask mandate and it has been proved that masks don't work. This is also a matter of civil rights and freedom of choice. We should have a choice of what we should put on our bodies.</p>
Dave Zajack	<p>We appreciate the care and consideration the board has taken during this pandemic. The current downward trends & community vaccination rates support the school districts moving to mask optional as implemented by District 58. Please consider changing District 99 to be mask optional.</p>
Laura Zajack	<p>We appreciate the care and consideration the board has taken during this pandemic. The current downward trends & community vaccination rates support the school districts moving to mask optional as implemented by District 58. Please consider changing District 99 to be mask optional.</p>
Rebecca Bossard	<p>Thank you for listening to the families in your District. Please consider allowing families to make a choice for not wearing or wearing masks in school. Please listen to the students. Thank you. Best wishes for a smooth meeting. I pray it has less friction that what the children are experiencing at the high school. I feel education has taken a back seat. Looking ahead for unity and positive mental health.</p>
Kathleen Ramsey	<p>It's time D99 to end the mandate. Mask optional doesn't mean all kids go maskless. If parents or students are nervous, they will be safe with their mask on. I would also ask that you end the discriminatory enforcement of weekly testing for the unvaccinated teachers and employees of the district.</p>
Parents of 4	<p>Please remove the mask requirement for children. It's time to move forward. High risk individuals have full access to vaccines, boosters and even Covid pills. We must take care of our children, who continue to decline from social, developmental, and mental health costs. We believe in being kind to others, but we must also be kind to ourselves.</p> <p>"Accumulating evidence and collective experience argue that children, particularly school-aged children, are far less important drivers of SARS-CoV-2 transmission than adults." https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/146/2/e2020004879/36879/COVID-19-Transmission-and-Children-The-Child-Is</p> <p>If we stop living life freely because we are afraid of hurting someone else, then we have stopped living. Don't let the fear of what could happen make nothing happen. What we fear doing most is usually what we most need to do.</p>
Murtaza Sitabkhan	<p>Any change in recommendation should be based on facts about community transmission and vaccination rates. For example, district 204 shared logical scientific rationale about why they voted to go mask recommended/optional. Would like to see the same here rather than caving to political pressure from either side.</p>
Erin Kolschowsky	<p>I support MASK OPTIONAL in our schools! It is time to remove mask and vaccine mandates!</p>
Zack Bakker	<p>On Monday night I hope you vote for mask optional. I'm a student at DGN and the student community has been tired of the masking. My friends and I were taken from our classes and isolated inside certain rooms for the entire school day since we didn't wear our masks. This happened for 3 days last week. We hope you can understand and vote optional on our behalf.</p>

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<p>Nathan Homberg</p>	<p>As a parent of two DGS students I have been extremely disappointed with how the District 99 school board has handled the Covid19 situation. Along with superintendent Thiele, you have stunted our children's educational, social and mental growth over the past two years. It is plain to me that your plan all along is to take no responsibility. Hiding behind what the governor said was "the science", which is actually what he/you determine the science to be, has come to an end. Numerous studies show what we've know all along, school age students are the least likely age group to have adverse effects from the virus.</p> <p>On February 4, 2022 the Sangamon County Judge ruled your mask mandate was illegal and therefore void. Our girls went to school and were treated like criminals. They were not protesting, they were simply following what was their legal right to a compete education. At the beginning of last week you had one set of rules but by the end of the week you had changed them. In order to keep students in line, you decided to call it a protest. Classifying it as "a student protest" would allow you punish the students that didn't follow your illegal mask mandate. My initial disappointment became utter disgust for you superintendent Thiele and any board member participating in the blackmail. You also said you as a public high school cannot choose sides of political demonstrations (this was not one) and cannot endorse or participate in political activities. The choice not to wear a mask has nothing to do with politics but, as I stated above, has everything to do with their legal right to a complete education. Maybe you should share this with the teachers, who are voicing their political views during class and have been throughout the past two years.</p> <p>Let me be clear, the schools job is to education, not to parent. Tomorrow, Monday February 14, 2022, I expect the board to drop the District 99 mask mandate and let us families decide what's best for our children. In your February 10, 2022 email you talk about consequences. If you don't remove the mask mandate, those of us who support families rights will do everything in our power to vote in new board members who believe that it's us parents who know what's best for our children. Once that's done we will move swiftly to remove superintendent Thiele from his position.</p> <p>I look forward to the correct resolution at the board meeting tomorrow.</p>
<p>Tom Yednock</p>	<p>I have spoken to a state representative about the mask mandate ruling, the temporary hold on mandates is stated in the judges ruling to only apply to the families listed in the suit, not school wide. Additionally, masks are the schools discretion as a dress code item so they should be treated as such with their use positively impacting the safety of every single D99 student.</p>
<p>Jen Pickering</p>	<p>As a Downers Grove resident and taxpayer, I am appalled that you have not let those kids go mask free yet. My children go to Montini and have been mask free for a week. It has changed their life. The joy of going to school that first day was amazing to see. Tears of joy streaming down their faces knowing that they will get to see their friends and hear their teachers clearly. What you are doing to these kids in Downers Grove is not acceptable. The law has spoken and you are violating their right to due process.</p> <p>Keeping the students at Downers Grove North masked is an embarrassment to the community. Schools all around the state are letting their kids get back to normal and you are denying the kids in our community that chance. You need to let them resume life as soon as possible.</p>
<p>Karen Kohout</p>	<p>I agree with mask optional on 2/18.</p>
<p>Brian Murphy</p>	<p>The CDC continues to recommend universal masking in schools. The School board should follow those recommendations. Board members are not elected to be the experts - they are elected to get expert advice. The board should NOT concede to the small but loud mob. Mobs are not experts and should not set policy. Lifting the mask mandate now (against CDC recommendations) to appease the mob will only send the message that they can throw a fit to get their way the next time they don't agree (what's next - banning the books they complained about at a recent board meeting?). COVID numbers are in decline. The CDC will likely change its recommendation soon as a result. Why not just be patient and wait for that expert advice? https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html</p>
<p>Brett Pickering</p>	<p>I go to Montini Catholic High School and we have recently moved to masks optional. It finally feels like I am living the life of normalcy again. I believe that wearing masks in school affects the way students learn and no student should have to be forced to wear one to interfere with their learning. Please stop making my friends at DGN wear masks.</p>
<p>Matt Topic</p>	<p>Please keep the mask mandate until the CDC ends its recommendation. You aren't qualified to contradict the CDC.</p>

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Lori Ficht	<p>It saddens me that these students are being used as political pawns. I truly believe that the board and its leader are acting out of self promotion and not the emotional well being of the children and families that they serve. The amount of hate and division I witnessed at the school last week was gut wrenching. This is the result of leaders losing there way. Our children are truly our future and the lessons being taught at district 99 makes me afraid for that future.</p>
Deandra Powell	<p>I am in favor of allowing parents to make choices for our children. Kids have suffered wearing masks long enough. I myself suffer from chronic bronchitis and I work for the school system. In light of my medical condition I simply cannot wear a mask for extended time frames. It results in immediate headaches and difficulties breathing. My son has asthma and the option of masking has never been allowed. We are all different and wearing masks affects us differently. I chose to not return to work until I would not have to wear a mask simply because my body does not allow that option. Moreover, financially it has been a struggle. Kids have been forced to mask up no matter what the effects have been on them. It's time to end it and get back to our normal way of living. Thank you sincerely.</p>
Heidi Engel	<p>I would appreciate the School Board keeping the mask mandate in place through at least the first 2 weeks of March. Covid has surprised us many times over. I feel it is more responsible to allow the numbers to be low for a couple weeks before removing the requirement to be safest.</p> <p>I would also like to compliment the school administration in how they handled the protesting students who didn't wish to wear their masks. It is their right to protest, but choices have consequences.</p>
Debbie Jensen	<p>I wasn't going to complete this form, however, based on the email we just received, I urge the board to vote NO on masks optional. If masks become optional, are these CHILDREN going to be separated from others who care enough not to spread a potentially deadly virus? Will there be a plan in place when we have to go remote just prior to Spring Break? I know several of the anti-mask families and when Covid spreads through the schools, these Covid positive people will still go on vacation and spread it to others. Maybe a delay to masks optional should wait until after Spring Break. I have heard from people that they will still send their children to school even if they are positive or won't be testing their children even if they have symptoms. Please don't cave to these people and keep our children and staff members safe. Thanks!</p>
Laura Collins	<p>Kids should not be required to mask—it is causing detrimental harm.</p>
Kelly Alexander	<p>You are requesting the mask mandate to life but we all know the students who don't wear one will taunt and terrorize the students who choose to wear one like last week where a girl was surrounded and students attempted to get her to remove it. There is nothing safe about this, the emotional impact it will have on kids who continue to wear a mask will be harmful and honestly could cause trauma like the situation last week.</p> <p>Kids were given pizza who were in classrooms that chose not to wear a mask (they were rewarded) while the other students who chose to protect others didn't. There is nothing fair about this, it's a political move and extremely harmful physically and emotionally.</p>
Kelly Alexander	<p>With the rates steadily declining the school board should wait until windows can be opened and classes can be held outdoors instead of giving into pressure of anti maskers. Student safety should be the utmost concern; even with a N-95 mask there is still a percentage of catching covid and these masks from personal experience need to be thrown out after several uses due to elastic and sanitation.</p> <p>My daughter is vaccinated and has recently visited her pulmonologist. Her doctor asked if her breathing problems were due to covid; they are not. He said the month of ER trips, doctors appointments and her struggling to breathe are often times related to those who have had covid. My daughter is one of the students who could die from this. You need to allow people to do elearning if you lift the mask mandate NOT give them a mask. You are going to do more harm emotionally to kids from being bullied for wearing a mask and their anxiety of being around those who chose not too.</p> <p>If you vote to remove these allow kids to do elearning to reduce their risk of social emotional harm</p>
Steve Held	<p>Masks should be made optional.</p>
Paul Fellows	<p>It is foolish that the Superintendent is so scared of a "potential" reversal, that he puts his recommendation until after Feb 17. Pritzker has no idea what the metrics are and the fact he is discriminating against OUR children, while saying he is lifting the mandate for others indoor is the definition of discrimination toward our children. What's worse is that D99 should be a leader and partner in these decisions rather than having D58 lead by themselves.</p>

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Deanna Ramsey	<p>Hi my name is Deanna Ramsey and I am a junior at Downers Grove North. As per the emails request and due to limited seating I am leaving a comment in the case of me not being able to speak in person. I have struggled with many things throughout these 3 years at North but I can tell you that for many more it has been much worse since covid. My life hasn't been "normal" since 8th grade along with many others. I have been nothing but respectful to the authorities and to my fellow classmates but I am sick of being treated like I don't have a voice. I was raised in a strong household to tell people when I am hurt or angered and this is that situation. I was apart of the mass that protested throughout this past week and that was a small voice but now I need to prove that measures should be taken. I am not asking for full immunity or for everyone to go completely maskless but I am asking for that option to see my fellow classmates faces. The facts from the relentless doctors that have proven that our time to fear is over and we now have to do something about what has controlled us. I really hope you understand how much stress and strain you have put on 100s of students these past years, not weeks, but years. This isn't politics, this isn't social standings, this is facts. Thank you</p>
Nathan Hornberg	<p>To the District 99 board members, we all received the email from superintendent Thiele advising us of his recommendation that starting Friday, February 18, 2022 masks will be optional. Why February 18th? I have my theory but won't get into that.</p> <p>Superintendent Thiele talks about health experts but he seems to only listen to the health experts that support his decisions/recommendations. We have all listen to health experts who have different opinions. The majority of health experts I've heard from recently agree that school age children are the least likely age group to have adverse effects from the virus. So again, why wait until February 18th?</p> <p>As a parent of two DGS students who were treated like criminals last week I expect the board to vote to end the District 99 mask mandate immediately and make it mask optional on the beginning of the February 15, 2022 school day.</p> <p>As you're aware, there is a large contingent of parents and local residents that think poorly of the decisions you've made over the past two years. Voting to make District 99 mask optional immediately will go a long way to restore our trust in the board.</p>
Will Mix	<p>I support the removal of mask mandate. Those who choose to wear them can.</p>
Anne Bringle	<p>My oldest child goes to a University which requires vaccination and boosters to everyone who has an in person class. They are still masking as of now whenever indoor on campus. In the beginning of the school year they were saying they needed 75% of the students vaccinated to go back in person and after the break they all needed to be boosted to be in person. These numbers were reached and school continues.</p> <p>Maybe the way to go about this is to decide on a percentage of vaccination in the school needed for the teachers and students and staff to feel safe. Once that percentage has been reached, they should be mask optional.</p> <p>The hospitals are finally seeing a decline from the last surge. I think it is a public responsibility to continue to do what we can to help these numbers stay low. The doctors and nurses are exhausted.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>

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PLEASE MAKE MASKS OPTIONAL FOR OUR CHILDREN IN DISTRICT 99!

My daughter is a Sophomore at South High School. She would love to be allowed to choose whether she needs to wear a mask all day in school or not. The masks are very uncomfortable for her to be forced to wear. It causes her problems which make it hard for her to breathe, make her feel hot and sometimes even makes her dizzy like she is going to pass out. In addition to all of the challenges high school students face, these are things she (or all of the students & staff) should not be forced to endure.

That's why it is my hope and wish that the D99 board votes in favor of making masks optional for the students and staff of DGS HS and DGN HS. This would make a huge difference in the life of our daughter (who is a Sophomore at South) as well as all other students and staff at both schools. Masking our students is harmful to their physical and mental health. By making masks optional, our students will again be able to see other students' and teachers' smiles, and other facial expressions which are all key components of effective communication. Two years after the beginning of the pandemic, we know so much more about the virus and how to stop it, including abundant evidence showing the lack of efficacy of some of these mitigation measures like cleaning surfaces and masking in schools.

Russ Novotny

In Dr. Thiele's own words in his most recent email, "Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been told that vaccines and treatments are the pathway back to normalcy; these resources are readily available. In July of 2021, I made a similar recommendation and my recommendation has not changed. The fact is, other schools throughout the country have been operating safely in mask-optional environments this year without a significant negative health impact. I believe we need to do the same."

I also believe we need to do the same. As of February 28, the entire state's mask mandate for all indoor businesses and locations will be cancelled. With all of this in mind, I hope you find it to be an easy decision to allow our students to be mask-optional while in school, and on the bus. As it was pointed out recently, school buses are NOT forms of public but are private methods of transportation contracted by the school district for the purpose of transporting our children to and from school.

So with all of this in mind, please make the right decision and vote in favor of optional masking for District 99. Thank you for your time and consideration in this crucial matter!

Sincerely,

Russ Novotny

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<p>Janet Novotny</p>	<p>PLEASE MAKE MASKS OPTIONAL FOR OUR CHILDREN IN DISTRICT 99!</p> <p>My daughter is a Sophomore at South High School. She would love to be allowed to choose whether she needs to wear a mask all day in school or not. The masks are very uncomfortable for her to be forced to wear. It causes her problems which make it hard for her to breathe, make her feel hot and sometimes even makes her dizzy like she is going to pass out. In addition to all of the challenges high school students face, these are things she (or all of the students & staff) should not be forced to endure.</p> <p>That's why it is my hope and wish that the D99 board votes in favor of making masks optional for the students and staff of DGS HS and DGN HS. This would make a huge difference in the life of our daughter (who is a Sophomore at South) as well as all other students and staff at both schools. Masking our students is harmful to their physical and mental health. By making masks optional, our students will again be able to see other students' and teachers' smiles, and other facial expressions which are all key components of effective communication. Two years after the beginning of the pandemic, we know so much more about the virus and how to stop it, including abundant evidence showing the lack of efficacy of some of these mitigation measures like cleaning surfaces and masking in schools.</p> <p>In Dr. Thiele's own words in his most recent email, "Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been told that vaccines and treatments are the pathway back to normalcy; these resources are readily available. In July of 2021, I made a similar recommendation and my recommendation has not changed. The fact is, other schools throughout the country have been operating safely in mask-optional environments this year without a significant negative health impact. I believe we need to do the same."</p> <p>I also believe we need to do the same. As of February 28, the entire state's mask mandate for all indoor businesses and locations will be cancelled. With all of this in mind, I hope you find it to be an easy decision to allow our students to be mask-optional while in school, and on the bus. As it was pointed out recently, school buses are NOT forms of public but are private methods of transportation contracted by the school district for the purpose of transporting our children to and from school.</p> <p>So with all of this in mind, please make the right decision and vote in favor of optional masking for District 99. Thank you for your time and consideration in this crucial matter!</p> <p>Sincerely, Janet Novotny 630-951-8059</p>
<p>Anne Rossi</p>	<p>Mask mandates have proven to be ineffective. Compare Illinois and Florida, states that are unmasked and hospitalizations are similar. Graphs are similar. We are ending mask mandates for adults but students are still masked. Does this even make any sense? Children death rates from COVID-19 is less than 0.01%. The argument that children can spread it to their vulnerable relatives is now a moot point. We already know that even vaccinated people with boosters can get and spread Covid. Covid is spreading in schools WITH mask mandates... They do NOT work. Free our children from fear... If a parent wants their child to wear a mask, that should be their choice. Students have a right to learn without any barriers to learning. It is common sense to see that masks affect the social well-being of children as well. I hope the school board will follow the science and also put the mental health of our students first by NOT requiring masks.</p>
<p>Steve Chrasika</p>	<p>I fully support masks being optional for students and staff starting immediately.</p>

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	<p>Dear BOE,</p> <p>Thank you for calling a special meeting, and resulting email from Hank this evening.</p> <p>While appreciative of the acknowledgement that our 99 community is in dire divide, and placing importance on the educational environment is very big change and step in the right direction, I have a few heartfelt responses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If approved this needs to happen effective immediately. You can not undo what these students experienced last week. From using separate bathrooms, to being attacked on social media, to teachers calling it a game and pathetic. Friendships lost and damaged beyond repair. We don't get redos in life, but you sure have control on having that happen immediately. It is crucial for a board member to request to amend the date to Wednesday, February 16. District 58 did it in 2 days. We should too. The student and staff tensions are at epic levels. As we learn and strive to respect one another again, whether masked or unmasked, prolonging it until Friday, is not safe, supportive or wise. Past, current and future 99 families have lost trust and respect for the integrity of this Board and administration. 2. The continuing small venue is also fostering a big sense of silencing, devaluing, and disregarding the public. DGN has had two large events this past week (a band and choir concert), within the same covid protocols. Again, this makes no sense and furthers public mistrust and hypocrisy. We ALL want to hear in person and be present real time in this most important decision facing our community and children's lawful right to an education. We want to know the Board members positions and hear the discussion. 3. Clearly there are still legal decisions happening this week. Also, new forms for families to join this lawsuit as plaintiffs. I am aware of a few already signed up and MANY more following this critical vote on Monday. Forcing the hand of families with students at D99 to join in a lawsuit is a pretty serious picture of the public mistrust to you and Hank. It is time. Do the right thing. <p>This is probably my most mild correspondence with the board and administration in 3 years. You don't even read them anymore. I am respectfully asking each one of you to vote YES. YES for Hank's modified plan. It is the only way to move past the damage done. We don't get a redo, but we CAN do the right thing now.</p> <p>*** I further ask a Board member to request a modification to this plan, to the effective date of Wednesday, February 16. There should be no reason to delay healing, unless it's some non-transparent political or union request. It's been 3 SCHOOL YEARS. This personal choice and constitutional right to learn and get an education should happen today. PLEASE VOTE YES. NOT FOR THE PARENTS, FOR THE STUDENTS THAT SHOWED PERSEVERANCE AND RESOLVE THIS PAST WEEK. PLEASE VOTE YES.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Renata Bzayk	I want my daughter to have a choice not to wear a mask.
Nicile Goyette	I'd like to plead with the board to allow the district to go mask optional on behalf of the best interests of our children and the community. This has gone on to long and is negatively impacting our children. Its time to put politics aside and the every changing science. The students have the right to choose what is best for each of them within this context. Respectfully, Mrs. Goyette
Nancy H DeLoach	Thank you to the board, administrators, faculty, and staff who have been faced with such tremendous challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. I appreciate your dedication during a difficult and stressful time. I understand that studies can be found that show masking at school does not effectively reduce community transmission. There are also studies that show masks are effective in school settings in reducing transmission. It is not possible to know for certain how much masking is helping, or not helping, to control transmission in our district. How do the teachers and staff feel about masks becoming optional? Will they feel safe in their workplace? Will remote learning be available to students who are immunocompromised, or have family members who are high risk? Thank you.
Aleksandra Gawley	Please make masks optional. Thank you.

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Tanya Thornton	Without requiring a COVID vaccination for students , eliminating the mask mandate is caving to a political agenda instead of following CDC guidelines . There are long term risks with even mild cases of COVID. Families that have taken precautions at home will now have their exposure wide open. The decision to eliminate mask mandates is misguided.
Sandra Sobieraj Westfall	Thank you for following the science and medical recommendations and holding the line against the anti-vaxxers, anti-maskers. The mask requirement and our school community's practically seamless use of masks has served DGN so well so far, allowing our kids to be in school all year so far. This pandemic is NOT over. Now is NOT the time to give up. Health experts continue to recommend that masks be worn in schools (and elsewhere). Please continue to listen to the health experts, the scientists -- and not the minority mob of self-proclaimed "patriots," however loud, threatening and mis-named they are. I appreciate that this is easier said than done because they ARE threatening. But I thank you for standing up to them for our children's sake.
Wendy Albanese	The email sent stated students are choosing not to be in class due to mask wearing. This is not true. The students want to be able to breathe properly while in class. Some teachers intimidate and encourage bullying to students who choose not to wear a mask. E.g. A student social media post "I hope ppl who don't wear masks die" This is a troubled child. A responsible teacher should report this and get this child help. I feel this student and many others like her are a bigger danger than mask wearing. Teaching students when employed there are consequences for exercising your rights and freedom of speech, such as loss of pay and vacation days. Government and corporations do not own you. What country do you think this is? What country do you want this to be? Another consequence when exercising your civil liberties can be the company or school could close down. The staff could lose their jobs. This is all about politics and nothing to do about safety. Masks are not preventing the spread of covid. I am sure more than half the students and staff already had covid. I am very aware that covid has killed people and many families have suffered. I work in a hospital and manage the ventilators. It has been over two years, and I feel if people are still living in fear you have options. Wear a N95, remote learning, get vaccinated and all your boosters. Please let mask wearing be optional. Thank you
Maria Valeria Abbruzzese Borchichi	I support Dr Thiele's recommendation to the Board .
Brian Sewell Joyce Garcia	Unmask the kids. Fire Hank. He is an incompetent tyrant. Maybe a warden at state prison is a better fit. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is still recommending that people wear masks in schools, regardless of vaccination status. It is to soon to have people unmasked In the schools the numbers are not low enough yet. Safety should be the priority. Thank you

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<p>Jim P Devitt</p>	<p>As a taxpaying, voting citizen of D99, I am disgusted by the actions of the Board for quite a while now, from abusive language directed to me, to blatant lies, to showing unbelievable bias and lack of empathy. Recent actions have turned my stomach even more. Look around, you have made D99 and our community the butt of about every joke out there now. Your handling, or, more correctly, MISHANDLING of this entire pandemic is shameful! Using these children as pawns in a game and for what? Higher political office? Personal fame (for 10 seconds)?</p> <p>I understand why world history is being subtly phased out in schools; the comparisons to past history would VERY easily be made. When students speak of being pulled from classrooms (how much disruption does that cause?) and marched past other students who call them names, spit on them, threaten them, take pictures of them to post on social media (with no "consequences" to them) while on their way to the gym for "processing" as the student called it, is chilling. After that, they are told they cannot speak and broken into smaller groups in various places, some within view of other students who continue to mock them, (again, without "consequences") and not given access to learning as you are required by law to give them. You can say they are lying, but you will only be kidding yourselves. Every student tells the same story. We have seen things like this in history before, we realize that first and foremost you are trying to break these student's spirits. Don't you think you have already done that by keeping the illegal mandate in place while one school after another around here remove theirs? What about having an event at school and allowing the crowd there to be maskless? Complete hypocrisy for all to see!</p> <p>Speaking of crowds, your attempt to move the location of the meeting is a sham as well, and is also seen by the people. How can you host school events in the auditorium and gyms, but then cannot have the board meetings there, allowing the public full access to them? What are you trying to hide from? The claims, which you listened to, that came from the left, were unfounded. I'm sure they didn't tell you that they also invited ANTIFA there, who took pictures of speakers, posted them on social media, and harassed them as well. Those same people on the left, the loud obnoxious few, have lied about things like assaults after board meetings, harassment and many other things, but you just eat it up. ANTIFA will be at Mondays meeting too; will you be calling out a dozen police officers in riot gear for them as well? Maybe the National Guard? Why not have the meetings in a unisex washroom, that will insure NO ONE can be there to speak out!</p> <p>You had a huge opportunity to be LEADERS, and you spinelessly caved to a very small vocal few. A few who have police records. Have been proven liars. Have been proven to spread misinformation. Do not even live in the area. Attack anyone/everyone that has an opinion different from theirs. Support hate groups such as ANTIFA. At this point, it is almost too late to do the right thing. The district that preached inclusivity has become so fractured, so divided that there is almost no hope of rebuilding it. At least with the current members. Come election time, you will see a very large change in the District. So many people have been silent for too long, but they are now waking up and realizing what is really going on. I hope you are ready for it. We are.</p>
<p>Linda Workman</p>	<p>My grandson is a senior at Downers Grove North High School. I am writing to ask you to please change your rules and let masks be optional for the students. There is very little risk from Covid 19 to children. Most people have been vaccinated. Children and their families can still make the choice to wear a mask if they feel it is necessary. I hope you make the correct decision and allow our school families make their own decisions regarding the health of their children. You are not their parents, and you should allow individual families to decide what is best for themselves.</p>
<p>Tami Janicki</p>	<p>There is a lot more going on here besides to wear a mask or to not to. At this point of covid, if you truly think a mask is the deal breaker as far as transmission goes- you shouldn't be on a school board and you need to educate yourselves. I could go on and on regarding masks and transmission, but lets be honest, this is not about masks and transmission. This is about politics and control at the kids expense. Please, I beg you. If you are a mother, a father, a human....you must stop this madness and think of the kids. The masks are hurting them more than helping them. Look at the statistics of covid related deaths and/or hospitalizations in Dupage County for 14-18 year olds and compare it to the number of mental health related incidents, suicides, suicide attempts, in that same age group. If you claim to go by statistics- there is your answer. It is mind boggling. I understand the feeling of having 'blood on your hands' should a District 99 child die of covid. Are you prepared for the 'blood on your hands' if a child dies of suicide or experiences a tragic mental health event? Mask optional is the way to go here, for the kids. Do your job. Please.</p>
<p>Kevin Kuster</p>	<p>I am encouraging the board to make District 99 mask optional. Stop masking immediately!</p>

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<p>Robert Zambreno</p>	<p>Thank you members of the board, school staff and teachers. We appreciate all that you're doing to support the safety of our students, staff and families. We know that you did not sign up to operate in this kind of harsh environment and we appreciate your resilience. We also appreciate the opportunity that you provided for public input. Please know that despite the protests of a few petulant parents and their kids, you have the full support of many parents like myself. We understand that the safety of our students and the general population during a pandemic supersedes the inconvenience of wearing a mask. While no one wants to wear a mask, it is something that you do to protect yourself and the people around you. Many falsely claim that it is an affront to their freedoms but not wearing a mask encroaches on another persons freedom to go out in relative safety. Our children should not have to attend school under the intimidation of unruly parents and their brainwashed children. Like many, I feel that it would not be unreasonable to wait a few weeks until the weather warms up and Covid numbers drop further before local schools overturn their current mask regulations to ensure that we are in a safe situation that will ultimately reduce the need to return to the measures that these protestors find so offensive. The school has done a fantastic job of providing vaccinations and yet they still don't require them, so the very least people can do is wear a mask in school settings where social distancing is difficult. There's a growing body of scientific knowledge about the virus and how face masks inhibit it's transmission, it's simply indisputable. The virus and the science surrounding it does not care if you believe in it or masking. It's just a shame that adult parents can't be mature enough to trust the experience of the medical experts, teachers and staff. People are free do what they want in their own homes but when you visit a place of business or a public venue it's their policies that rule the day. Plain and simple. Thank you again for all you do.</p>
<p>Mark Brenner</p>	<p>My family is vaccinated and boosted, and I supported masks when the pandemic began, because we were "following the science." The science has now shown that cloth masks are largely ineffective. Vaccines are available for anyone that wants one. N95 masks are available for those that may want that extra layer of protection for themselves. It's time to follow the science again and make masks optional.</p>
<p>Karen Crowley</p>	<p>I'm very happy to see Hank's proposal to the board for tonight's meeting. I believe DG99 is heading in the right direction. However, I'm disappointed in a couple things. One, knowing how many people feel about this topic, to only allow a limited # of people at tonight's board meeting is unacceptable. I was at the DG58 Board meeting last week at Village Hall with ample seating for everyone that wanted to attend. It was very civil, professional and without issue. In addition, our tax dollars helped remodel both schools. The DGS or DGN auditoriums would be completely adequate for this type of meeting. I was in the meeting a few months ago at DGN and it worked out well. There was plenty of seating for those that wanted to attend in person. I've heard all the talk about safety concerns, but I didn't witness any at the last meeting at DGN. I think by making folks wait outside in the cold temperatures is a bigger safety issue than a few folks talking out of turn (including our very own school board president). Please consider moving the meeting a bigger venue.</p> <p>Also, the proposal has mask optional starting on Friday, 2/18. The proposal in my opinion if voted yes on should begin immediately. These are high school kids and teachers who are well versed on what is going on. They don't need 4 days to transition. DG58 started today, it's time for DG99 to catch up and start ASAP. Thanks for your consideration.</p>

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	<p>To the Board:</p> <p>As a concerned educator and mother of a child who does not have the option to vaccinate yet because she is 4 years old, I felt compelled to reach out to you directly. I have written in to the link Dr. Thiele provided for comments, but I also recognize that those comments are usually gathered, with only a few selected to read aloud.</p> <p>I have always appreciated the board's willingness to hear from various perspectives. I believe that you all have had an impossible job of looking after so many, and when there is such disagreement, someone will be left unhappy. However, I do believe that this choice should not be about hurt feelings or anger about freedoms. Rather, it should still come down to science and what is best to protect the community.</p> <p>Therefore, it is my stance that allowing the students and professionals the option to mask is absolutely the wrong choice to make at this moment.</p> <p>While I can appreciate Dr. Thiele's stance that masks are a symbol of "division," I think I could argue the opposite as well. Those who continually protested and did not wear masks at meetings, in halls, or in the classrooms, pose just as much, if not more of a division, and yet it seems as if those are the voices we are leaning into - instead of science - stating that those who are masking to protect others are the symbol of division. Setting aside the notion that "maskers" are creating division, it comes down to that we should not allow masks to be optional UNTIL ALL OF THOSE AT RISK IN THE COMMUNITY HAVE THE CHANCE TO GET A VACCINE.</p> <p>Ignoring the fact the vaccination is not open to those under 5 yo yet completely disregards the risks so many take daily in a building where masks will now be optional. I think to merely focus on the feelings of teens and parents who disagree with masks is leading us to making a choice about this without using science and is calling the decision before the community can truly protect themselves. Because the truth is, masks are not a permanent imposition. They are a necessity for health, and while it is not ideal that it's been two school years gone, impatience with the rate of improvement does not make the virus go away. Asking for masks is a request of empathy, while everyone who needs and deserves protections seeks it.</p> <p>I have always respected the Board and their decisions, and I hope that we continue to base our choices on what we have always said were determining our choices. And we have seen other districts choose to keep masks in the face of angry parents, children, and / or faculty. I know that we can as well.</p> <p>A huge thank you to all the Board members for all you have done, and I appreciate you taking the time to read this,</p> <p>Nicole Proimos</p>
<p>Kelly Sanchez</p>	<p>It's time. There is no other way to really start this other than, it's time. Time to give these kids the choice. They should be able to choose whether to mask or not. They have been masked for two years. Some like my own spending their whole high school experience to date in a mask. They have sacrificed a lot when it comes to this pandemic and a lot of what normal childhood and teen experiences should be for them. I understand no one asked for this pandemic to come along and no one could have foreseen this happening but the fact is it did and for two years we have been pushing out when 'normal' was going to return. The fact is, COVID is here and its not going any where and we do need to learn to live with it. At this point there is absolutely no reason to keep masking the demographic that is least impacted by this virus. That is absolutely indisputable, so why then do we still feel the need to keep them in these masks. The masks do nothing to protect all these kids really. If you want to be protected the only mask that will do that for you as a n95 mask. So unless these kids are all walking around in those. what they have been covering their faces with haven't been doing anything. I understand that there are people who still worry about catching the virus or maybe bringing it home but the fact is there are other steps available to protect those people. That is what we were waiting for at the beginning and now those are here and we are still trying to keep this cloth covering that is literally just a piece of cotton, it just makes no sense. Kids should not be in masks all day long, they should not be participating in sports and physical activity (such as in gym) in masks. It is not healthy. Then there is the mental health aspect, these kids are hurting. It is not normal to go without seeing people faces all day, and for kids it so important to see expressions etc. Everywhere around us, people have realized its time and they have proven that it is possible! We are the last of the last and I can't stress this enough it's time. We keep saying just a little longer, just until this happens or that happens. This could go on and on as covid is here to stay. The truth is, there is no better time than now. Other districts, counties, states, countries are doing it and have provided the proof it can be done. So what exactly are we waiting for?? Give these kids the choice, its TIME to let them choose whether to mask or not.</p>

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Kate Wolkow	<p>The sad reality is that Covid-19 is here to stay; the likelihood of it being eradicated is slim. We can get vaccinated, but we won't be immunized. The vaccinated and the masked can still carry and contract Covid. It is time to move forward to a new normal. It is time to advocate for the children. We have required our children to carry the burden and spend two years behind masks that are ineffective at Covid mitigation, resulting in learning delays, social anxiety and depression. There are some that are now requesting that the children remain in masks at school, when the rest of society will be open to individual choice. Why should the children have the ability to participate mask free in all areas of society other than in the classroom? I strongly urge the Board and District 99 to approve a "Mask Recommended" policy effective immediately. Those students and teachers that are high risk, or have family that is high risk should have the option of wearing KN95 or N95 masks to provide adequate measures against contraction. Those students that are not high risk, many of whom have already contracted Covid with minimal symptoms should be allowed to make the choice to be mask free. In addition, if the Board is to implement any type of contact tracing, the policies should be the same for those that are or are not vaccinated, as we now know that vaccination status is not an indicator of whether an individual can contract or carry Covid. This is an opportunity for the the District to teach and exhibit inclusion; where no matter whether you chose to mask or not, vaccinate or not, you are a human with equal rights deserving equal respect.</p>
Amy Mordaunt	<p>Please continue to enforce the mask mandate in District 99. I feel making masks optional at this time in the pandemic is only going to cause more of a divide for the students. I am wondering what caused this change in recommendation. I appreciate all you have done over the course of this difficult time in education but I do feel this decision is not in the best of our students, their families & the wonderful staff of district 99.</p>
Michelle Davis	<p>I know that the decision to be made at tonight's board meeting rests heavily on your shoulders. The Board has always operated from a position of placing safety at the forefront, and for that I am appreciative. My request is that you continue to do so when voting in tonight's board meeting, and vote to continue the mask mandate requirement for High/Substantial risk in District 99.</p> <p>While I appreciate Dr. Thiele's comments on masks creating divisiveness, I feel as though ignoring the science behind masks to appease those that feel inconvenienced by them is placing an unnecessary risk in our schools. I am currently expecting my second child and have a 2-year old at home who cannot get vaccinated. If the mask mandate is lifted, I feel that my safety will be compromised and if this mandate is lifted I will need to choose between my safety, and the safety of my children, or my job.</p> <p>The risk of COVID has been an extremely difficult situation for teachers to endure while trying to do our jobs to the best of our ability. While I understand that we only make up a fraction of the people in this building, compromising our safety by removing masks is creating an unsafe work environment. While this decision will give students the right to choose whether or not to mask in school, I will not have the choice whether or not to be in this building.</p> <p>Our mask mandate has already set limits on when to make masks optional, and that being when COVID cases are a low to moderate risk in the community. This makes sense given the risk factors at that level. The fact that numbers are still high shows that spread is still happening. Please continue to keep these rules in place, rules that have thus far kept the spread contained, and made teachers feel safe coming to work.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and careful consideration.</p>
Laura Wojcik	<p>Masks stop particles that are larger than 0.3 microns for the best quality surgical-type mask. Influenza and Corona viruses are around 0.125 microns. Lesser quality more common surgical masks average 1-10 micron filtration. Therefore, masks do not stop aerosolized influenza and corona viruses. Additionally, the wearing of masks is detrimental to the mental and physical health of the students. It should be optional for all. Thank you.</p>

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<p>Kelly Miller</p>	<p>Below you will find almost the exact comments I shared with the District 58 school board last week and I think it MORE than applies to District 99 and it's current situation I think everyone is tired, NO matter what side of the masking or covid mitigations you fall on, you're tired. We can ALL admit that we have covid fatigue. We are tired of living behind masks, being scared if someone we know is going to get fatally sick. We are tired of not being able to see loved ones. We are tired of feeling like we are in the wrong if we don't agree with our neighbor, we are just tired.</p> <p>At the end of the day as a parent, I should be able to have a say in what is best for my student and my family. What is best for my kids may not be what is in the best interest for other students and that has to be okay! We have to at some point give the decision over to the families and allow them to make a decision that works for them. By giving the parents and their students the choice it allows us to say we are ready to move forward and start living with Covid as opposed to trying to fight Covid, because as we have seen we cannot fight Covid.</p> <p>Finally, it is time to set an example for our kids. The students have been watching us adults and honestly some of what they have seen is not okay. We need to show the students in this community that it is okay to not agree on everything. It does not mean that we hate each other, or wish terrible things on each other, it just means we do not agree. Our kids are watching and it's time for the parents/staff/administration of District 58 and District 99 to show our kids that we love them more than anything and that we will fight for them whether we are on the winning side or the losing side. Our students are worth fighting for and it is time to let them be seen and HEARD!!</p>
<p>Zoe A Clemens</p>	<p>We all wish the pandemic to be done and over, but it is not. If we give in to that wish and stop requiring masks, it won't help anything and this whole thing will just go on longer. It may be that it isn't deadly, but it still spreads and can still mutate. Just because the rates and 'low' just means that it's working and that we should keep going, not stop. People barely wear their masks right when it's required. Optional usually translates to not doing it ever. Until herd immunity is reached we cannot falter, cannot let anything get in so we protect the vulnerable. The small children.</p>
<p>Fred & Lara Gusel</p>	<p>At this time you need to approve the Mask Optional Option for student! Per the Judges Ruling on the Governors mandate this is what the community desires and expects from it elected officials. Should the ruling be reversed we will follow the mandate (although we don't agree)</p>

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I would respectfully ask the Board to continue with the current masking requirement to attend school until there is more clarity from the state government - even while unveiling a plan to reduce masking requirements later this winter, the state government said schools should continue masking until further notice. Anything less, given the previous communication that the District 99 masking requirement is legal and expected to be followed, is a clear failure to put student and staff safety first.

This feels like the Superintendent is caving in to the angry mob outside the schools and is simply tired of dealing with Covid-19 at the level required to keep the students safe. I am disappointed both in his recommendation and the timing.

Removing the mask mandate on short notice against the directions of state officials also leaves a lot of very difficult unanswered questions.

Does the district have the support of teachers / the teachers union to lift the mask mandate?

Do the schools intend to enforce their "no tolerance" policy on bullying? We have seen kids wearing masks bullied in school the past week - this will come up more in the future as kids have to choose to wear / not wear their mask in the face of peer pressure.

Should the governor win the mask mandate legal challenge will the Board reinstate the mandate? It seems to me you need to continue with the legal District 99 mandate until this is clarified.

Thomas
Thompson

Will there be a spike in Covid cases post-Super Bowl? We can't know this yet, but there has been a spike after nearly every traditional gathering/holiday weekend in the past 12 months, you have your own data to review.

Will you offer remote learning options again for teachers and students that don't want to be around unmasked/unvaccinated students? You do not have a fully vaccinated student body, so allowing unvaccinated and unmasked students in the school in advance of state-level direction to do so seems a very unnecessary risk for the rest of the school population.

If the Board feels the Superintendent's recommendation is backed by science (does not appear to be), the state government (does not appear to be), the majority of the district (how would he know? Most of us are not loud/angry like the mob outside the school last week swearing at my daughter as she left to "take off her ****ing mask" - which is why I am sending this long comment, someone needs to hear the rest of us), and in the best interests of the students, then vote as you see fit. We (my student and family) will not be outside the school yelling or protesting, we will not send angry emails or do anything else stupid, we will just continue to wear masks and hope the schools at least have the backbone to enforce their bullying policies.

Sorry for the length, but it seems to me the Superintendent's recommendation is early by a few weeks, a continuation of the current policy until the end of February with a review prior to that date seems a much more considered approach to the end of the masking mandate (and many of the issues I raise will resolve themselves by then - one way or the other).

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Respectful, Responsible & Engaged. This is the Mustang way. This is what our students are taught. They should be inspired & led by example. Is it Respectful to give in to violent tirades that threaten safety? Is it Responsible to remove the only safety measures we have left? No, it is teaching our students that if you yell loud enough & threaten long enough, your bad behavior & poor cognitive skills will be rewarded.

In August the Board agreed to look to the community covid numbers as a way to weigh the risks for the district 99 students & faculty. Covid numbers remain high.

During the duration of this pandemic, our school board has followed facts and science.

I expected these steps to keep our community safe to continue. Why would it change now? It has been so successful.

The safety measures available to keep us all safe are 1) social distancing, 2) vaccines, 3) testing, and 4) Masks. Of these options, district 99 has chosen to only require 1 of these. Masks.

It is our last and only line of defense.

Please do Not take this away.

How can we teach science in our classrooms, but not follow it?

Students are required to attend school. They are counting on the adults to keep them safe. Making masks optional will not protect those needing the most protection.

Taking away contact tracing takes away any possibility to know if anyone has been exposed. This leads to transmission throughout the community to many vulnerable people.

This proposal of no masks and no contact tracing sounds like hands have been thrown up & that the district has given up.

Now is not the time to give up. Please don't take away our only safety measure while numbers are still high.

Please don't give up on our community's safety.

Supporting Mask CHOICE!!!!!! Please make the right decision and let parents and students choose whether they should wear a mask or not. Students are missing important social cues from their peers and teachers. Facial expressions are so incredibly important to the learning environment and students are missing out on that. Also, teachers are missing out on being able to see their students faces. It can show when students are having a tough time learning something, all important things when teaching students!

As a parent of a DGS student I would advise the Board to reject Dr. Thiele's recommendation to switch to masks optional effective February 18th. While many districts have or are moving in that direction, it remains the recommendation of both medical professionals and local and national health departments to continue masking in schools. Our community continues to have a high transmission rate as defined by the CDC and case numbers remain higher than when we started this school year under the current mitigation measures. While I recognize the desire to move on because of both the general fatigue everyone is suffering and divisiveness of masking, the fact is that masking has provided my daughter, for whom I am speaking in support of, another layer of protection as she attends school. Combined with vaccination and other measures, masking helps protect her, her classmates, and contacts of all. I am very hopeful that as case numbers continue to decline, we can remove some of the mitigation measures like masking. We are getting close as things are improving greatly from the Omicron surge – but that timeline should be measured in weeks and not days as currently proposed. Thank you for your consideration.

Pam Brandt

Buffy Folise

David Jayne

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	<p>I am writing in favor of the mask optional vote and encouraging the Board to vote yes in favor of masks being optional. Though I am an educated healthcare professional, I am not going to try and cite statistics and health reasons. I truly believe that you are also all educated and able to read and quite frankly have all formed your own personal opinions by now about masking. I am writing to remember the reasons you get to vote. You get to vote as you were elected by the community to represent the communities opinions and to do what is best for our children's education. I am disappointed that there has not been a true survey done to ask the community what it is they would like. Sharing comments here is great, but a survey would have been better.</p> <p>When making a decision like this I always try to think of the risk / benefit. I think we all clearly understand the risk here. With that said, the risk is there because of the risk in the world. The risk of the children / staff not wearing their mask at school does not change the risk. Others can still choose to wear. Most are not wearing correctly. People are on top of each other outside, yes you can still get covid outside if you are close. Children are all needing a normal life. The risk to go without masks is not going to change covid outcomes right now. If it would, we can go back. If we don't now, then when? What are we waiting for? The benefits are huge. Faces can be seen, emotions can be interpreted, level of understanding and communication increased. The focus on if someone is wearing a mask or not, causing disruption, taking pictures of, all of this goes away. The focus is on education and NOT on masking opinions, political opinions and the craziness associated. The thought that my child would understand his teachers without the mask mumbling (potentially). The thought that someone might say, hey are you OK, you look sad today? The relationship building and recognition of our kids that has suffered. The benefits at this time outweigh the risk potential. Every single person is making a choice to vaccinate or not, to mask or not. I truly believe at this point they are making the educated choice for them and nothing the school does will change their mind. Two years in the education is endless out there and the school should no longer should feel any authority or need to protect and step in.</p> <p>I want to thank you all for your continued work and energy. I truly do not believe that you are not putting your full efforts forward. I am also a community member whom often finds themselves disappointed with the extremists on this topic (and a few other topics). I am not a huge believer in far right and far left of anything. I am a believer in an individuals right to choose. We chose to get our vaccines, we were not made to. We are asking for the choice with masks for the same reasons. I respect both sides and I am disappointed in many parents behaviors through this process. Their passions and frustrations have allowed them to make poor decisions, and I again say that for both sides. I also can say the same for some members of the Board. I have seen many other districts (including 58) and other surrounding high schools, where these similar topics and behaviors have been handled much better. I am disappointed that there are members of the board that have engaged and dug their heels in when other adults have behaved badly. I am disappointed that the board has not tried to reach the majority of us that our rationale and appropriate. I fear that the decision today will be based off of these experiences and personal beliefs instead of facts, majority and the children's best interest. I agree that many parents have made this far too political. I also agree that so have several board members. I am never a person is afraid to share my opinion or speak in public. I also can respect when others have a different opinion. I personally speak at board meetings or participate as much as I should due to the environment that has been created. The environment may not have been caused by you; however in your positions you have really let down those of us in the middle many times for how it has been handled. I appreciate your time and efforts, I truly do. I hope that you will give some thoughts to how to make this better in our community and be solution minded for the good of all moving forward instead of placing the blame back on the small other groups.</p> <p>I wish you the best of luck tonight. Thank you for your service.</p>
Jennifer Sevcik	<p>Writing to convey my appreciation for your hard work during these unprecedented times. I respect the policies created to keep as many people as safe as possible in order to return to in-person learning and extracurricular activities and I welcome the loosening of the Covid protocols as soon as appropriate. I completely understand a return to the current protocol is possible. Again, thank you for your hard work and thoughtfulness.</p>
Kari Alore	<p>I would like to encourage the board to keep the mask mandate in place in order to protect those unable to be vaccinated and, at least, until the staff is able to think through the potential issues that will occur as a result of the changing policy.</p>
Ryan Reyes	<p>I am writing to advocate that the Board keeps the mask mandate in place. I believe that we need to err on the side of safety and caution. As a teacher, I want to feel safe when I am at work and interacting with students. Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>
Jean A Alore	<p>For the safety of the entire staff and student body of DGS I strongly recommend that the mask mandate stay in effect.</p>
E. Naff	<p>I support maintaining the current board policy in favor of masks being mandated while community transmission is high or significant.</p>
Tara Griffin	<p>For so many reasons it is time to go mask optional along with the Superintendent's other recommendations. With the new science ie. John Hopkins study, stating masking is not that effective along with vaccines being available to all attending D99.</p>
Michael A Alore	<p>For everyone's safety masks should be worn in school.</p>

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Krystina LaSorsa	Please keep our community safe. Masks work and keep those who cannot be vaccinated due to health or age, safe. Please keep the mask mandate.
Jitka Peterson	I strongly suggest for my children attending DGS not wear the masks any longer.
Gary Whitman	I was pleased to read the Thursday evening email from the Superintendent and both Principals. It was encouraging to see them include a discussion about the consequences, both intended and unintended, of one's actions. It also was encouraging to read that their goal is the safety, well being, and supervision of the students. At that point, I assumed that meant that the Superintendent and Principals would not give in to the vocal minority protesting the mask mandate in our schools. Imagine my surprise when I saw the Superintendent's email on Sunday stating that he will be recommending that masks should be optional. I fail to see how such a recommendation teaches students about both intended and unintended consequences of their actions. What it clearly does teach them is that if one doesn't like something, all you need to do is complain loud enough while ignoring the rules, and you'll get your way. I hope the board has the backbone to stand up to the vocal minority of students and do what's right by what seems to be the vast majority of the students who are following the rules of the school society. If students disrupt their classrooms because they no longer want to wear masks, teach them about consequences--don't just cave into them.
Kristen Marie Alore	I would like to see the mask requirement stay in place. There are plenty of teachers, faculty members and students that live and interact with children and other people that either can't be vaccinated or are immune compromised. The mask mandate is for everyone's safety. If we want our children to be able to attend school in person the mask mandate is a way to keep students, teachers and faculty safe.
Justin Miller	The board should vote in favor of mask optional. What is best for the kids is to allow them the choice of wearing a mask. Most of the country does not require the kids to wear masks and they have not had any significant health impacts. It is time to lead by example and show our children what it looks like to have a choice and allow them to start making decisions.
Kristina Presern	Please make masks optional for our children
Elise Churchill	As a community member and parent to future district 99 students I ask that you follow the TRO and make masks optional for district 99 students and staff.
Sarah Mayer	Masking is a way to protect students and staff. Optional masks should be based on community transmission and for vaccinated individuals. Don't put our kids at risk.
Adam Bergh	I very much would like to see our children to have mask wearing as optional.
Kierstin Thompson	My comment is regarding the mask mandate. Please uphold the mask mandate in schools as long as the DuPage County Health Department recommends doing so. I was disappointed to hear Dr. Hank Thiele and other district administrators recommendation/support for going "masks requested." The messaging about masks so far has been that they protect the majority and that our responsibility is to each other. Making the masks optional seems to be about individual preference and not public responsibility. I understand that eventually the mask mandate will be eased or lifted, but changing the board's policy now feels reactionary to a small number of influential parent voices. I believe public education has a responsibility to uphold policies that protect the most vulnerable. Please stay the course and uphold the mask mandate to protect student, faculty, and staff health and well-being.
Mary Beth Werner	I request that District 99 shall operate in a mask-optional environment.
Pam Johnson	I recommend that the board continue to follow the health experts and require masks in schools for the near future. Making masks optional will not help the mental health of students or staff, it will make it worse. Consider the anxiety of someone (student or staff) with underlying health issues or family members with underlying health issues. Yes, they may wear their mask but if others are not wearing a mask the benefit is greatly reduced. Also, consider the anxiety and peer pressure for students to make the decision of whether to wear a mask or not. Please do not give in to a few students who are discomforted by the mandate. Attending school is the law and our public schools should be a safe and secure environment for all students and staff.

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<p>Sharon Bowers</p>	<p>Dear Dr Theile and Board , I am a nurse at a local hospital and have worked through this entire pandemic . Masking needs to be optional for our students . I work in our maternity and pediatric department and we have had very few cases of any child under 18 needing hospitalization for COVID . Students are at very low risk for severe illness with Covid . Our problem lies more with depression, isolation and suicide in this age group . I have 2 recent graduates from DGN a current sophomore and an incoming Freshman . Please vote yes for mask optional and allow the choice be up to each family . Providing an N 95 for our immune compromised students and teachers is a great idea . As only a properly fitted ,medical grade N95 will truly help slow the transmission of this virus. Respectfully Yours, Sharon Bowers , RN</p>
<p>Jennie Purintun</p>	<p>My stepson was segregated from his classmates and peers at DGN all last week due to his right to not have a bacteria/virus ridden mask on his face all day long. The science is clear- cloth masks don't work. And N95 masks also harbor bacteria, and aren't supposed to be worn for 7-8 hours a day. They don't protect his classmates who are already sitting several feet away in a classroom. And he is not sick to even be spreading a mild (for kids) illness. To continue to keep our kids from their education that we pay for, is a disgrace. We are thankful they're supposedly lifting the mandate for school kids as of Friday but why then? Why not now. This is turning into a political circus and a lot of parents and students have lost respect for the board members, and most of all- Hank, who lied to our kids faces and lectured them on opinion based garbage. Enough is enough. Let them breathe. Let them breathe.</p>
<p>Nancy Gunderson</p>	<p>Please allow masks to be optional.</p>
<p>Nicholas Purintun</p>	<p>My son is a Freshman at Downers Grove North. Based on new science data I believe that family's and students should have the right if they would like to wear a mask or not. These are our children and not the boards. If students feel uncomfortable I believe they should still wear a mask to "protect" themselves. With vaccinations available, some therapeutics, and Covid cases on the decline the time is now to unmask our students. I would also like to comment on the complete irresponsible actions of Downers Grove North. The students whom chose to stand up for their rights were treated disgustingly. Students were segregated and treated horribly. From teacher and administration bullying to lies coming from your superintendent. During a "lecture" from your superintendent he stated he supports the students and their rights, but doesn't even look over to a small group voicing their opinions outside on Main Street on Friday while he was departing DGN. Also last Monday DGN decided that they would not allow the students to get lunch but instead chose to "provide" a lunch of their choosing which happened to be a small piece of pizza and bottle water. It is unbelievable that DGN now believes they have the right to dictate what the students need for lunch even though the principle stated the students would be able to get lunch from the cafeteria. I believe the bullying, lying, and complete lack of organization needs to be addressed. The superintendent and his staff needs to answer for this. The board is voted from the people and needs to represent our community. Do the right thing.</p>
<p>Frank Ross</p>	<p>I would like to see the mask requirement stay in place. In order to protect the teachers, faculty, and students that live with children and other people who cannot be vaccinated.</p>

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<p>Thomas Parker</p>	<p>Dear members of the board, One of the most important decisions that you will make tonight is whether to require masks at Downers Grove North and Downers Grove South high schools. The answer is clear: you must vote to continue following the health experts and require students to wear masks in schools. The health experts know what they are talking about. If you continue to require masks to be worn by every student, less people will be infected by COVID and consequently, less people will be sent home, affecting their learning significantly. Masks do not kill people, but COVID does. First, we need to discuss public health experts and their opinions on the matter. It has been made clear, both by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the IDPH (Illinois Department of Public Health), that schools should still require their students and staff to wear masks. Secondly, by requiring and enforcing the wearing of masks by students and staff, less people will be forced to quarantine after becoming infected with COVID-19. If we went mask-optional, many people would cease to wear their masks, causing many people to be afflicted with COVID-19, forcing them to quarantine. This will lead to a severe lack of learning, far greater than what the lack of masks would compensate for, for the students who contract the virus and for those whose teachers become ill. Finally, COVID has killed far more people than masking ever has. In the US, more than 917,000 deaths from COVID-19 have been reported and there are almost certainly far more. In Illinois alone, there have been more than 35,000 deaths from COVID. That's more than the entire population of Woodridge and nearly three quarters of the population of Downers Grove! This is with taking preventative measures and without social distancing, masking, or vaccinations, there would certainly be far more. Thus far, no deaths from wearing a mask have been reported. Please make the decision we all know is right and continue to require masks for all. Sincerely, Thomas Parker, a concerned DGN student</p>
<p>Seann Purintun</p>	<p>Mask Mandate - Hello, regardless the lawsuit against D99 and others, mask have been a hard thing for school society. To have something on your face and being forced to have it on is not right. Especially that it's been proven as a fact that the cloth and paper mask that school, D99, hands out does nothing. Besides that, we are being prevented from learning because we are being forced to put on a mask when there is no need for it. Overall, this problem will occur until otherwise. Students including myself will keep fighting for our rights towards mask. This is not right towards students who are just trying to learn without having a useless, distracting mask on. Thank you.</p>
<p>Zachary Mucha</p>	<p>Hello, I'm a sophomore at South High, and I am in favor of continuing to have masking mandatory. I simply don't see how the removal of mandatory masking will benefit the social/emotional health of students. Though it may do so by allowing students to see other's facial expressions more easily, it may also cause anxiety and discomfort amongst other students. In a learning environment, students must be comfortable and focused on school, rather than worried if they are safe or too close to another student. Masking universally serves to alleviate concerns regarding the spread of illness. If masking is to be made optional, could it be made mandatory in the hallways? Due to large number of students attempting to travel through the hallways, social distancing is simply infeasible at times. For the safety of students, it may be worth considering making masks necessary at these sites where crowding occurs. There is a lot to consider in this decision, and many people with many views. While the right of students and parents to make their own choices is important, the safety and comfort of students is essential in school. Thank you.</p>
<p>Keri Norris</p>	<p>Dear District 99 Board of Education members, Please strongly consider voting "YES" for Dr. Thiele's recommended mask policy action of "strongly recommending them but no longer requiring them". We have a son, who struggles with language. We believe it would be extremely helpful, in his Spanish class in particular, if the teacher could see his mouth when he's trying to pronounce new words and especially blended sounds that are unfamiliar. His grade in Spanish is very low right now. My family members are educators/principals in other states, and they have had success with their "optional mask" policies. I believe District 99's policy of wearing masks was very important when the children first returned to school after the shutdown. I'm not sure, based on recent data, that being masked is as imperative at this time. My children have worn tired of being masked and would be elated to not wear them at school. We are extremely thankful they were allowed back into the building full-time this year - masked or unmasked. Thank you for your consideration in helping to support Dr. Thiele's newly, recommended mask policy.</p>
<p>Amy Rogers</p>	<p>The meeting tonight should have been moved to a bigger venue so that those community members who want to attend to show support for either side would be allowed to do so. I was at the last board meeting held in the DGN auditorium and never once felt in was out of control or board members needed to worry about their safety. Masks need to be optional. Each family should have the ability to decide whether they want to wear a mask or not. Also, if you vote to move to mask optional, it needs to happen immediately, not on Friday. There is no reason to wait.</p>

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Audrey Jayne	<p>As a student at DGS, I would like to encourage the Board to uphold the current mask mandate in our school. I know that going to school where masks are optional would make me feel uncomfortable and unsafe. While I understand that some people would prefer not to wear masks, they have done much to protect everyone's health throughout the pandemic. The CDC still recommends masking. We have followed the CDC's guidelines up to this point and there is no reason to change our stance now. Hopefully, if transmission rates keep going down, we could consider relaxing our procedures in the spring. However, taking away a mask mandate now is too soon and would put all of our students and staff at risk. Thank you for your consideration.</p>
Christina Tung	<p>I am concerned with Superintendent Thiele's recommendation for mask optional. I have children in various schools within the district, to include one at DGS. My child who attends, O'Neill Middle School told me today that 70% of kids chose not to wear a mask at school today. In her English classroom of 26 kids, only 4 were wearing masks. I'm worried that a similar outcome will happen at the high schools. It seems that when older kids are given a choice, it might not be the safest due to peer pressure. Please consider what will happen to the spread of Covid if 70% or more choose not to wear masks. We are still at a high rate of transmission in our community.</p>
Sarah David	<p>Please keep masks during high and substantial transmission rate please.</p>

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<p>Rich Brennan</p>	<p>2.14.22- Public Comment- D99 School Board Meeting "Personal Liability for School Board Members" By Rich Brennan -Downers Grove Taxpayer I support Hank Thiele's recommendation that on Feb 18, Masks will become voluntary for Students and Staff. But the change should be effective Tues Feb 15. Students and Staff have been unnecessarily masked for too long. The following is a cautionary message for the remaining areas of concern like Vaccinations for healthy young people..... I am a retired SCUBA Divemaster; my wife Pat is a retired Master SCUBA Diver Trainer. We trained in physiology, the gas laws, the science of decompression illness, SCUBA skills, Rescue skills, Emergency Medical First Aid, and PERSONAL LIABILITY. When we supervised students and certified divers, we assumed a life-long legal responsibility based on our status as dive professionals under the legal term: "Duty of Care". D99 lawyers tell you that the law indemnifies you from legal action for HARM caused by bad board decisions. I suggest you contact an attorney whose loyalty is only to you for a discussion of "Duty of Care" and liability lawsuits. Show your attorney the 2021 Brown University study on early childhood development:that documents a 23% drop in IQ and related early development measures caused by forced government mandates for vaccinations, lockdowns and masking. Show your attorney the recent Johns Hopkins University study: "...THE EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWNS ON COVID-19 MORTALITY" ".....lockdowns are not an effective way of reducing mortality rates.....The effect of border closures, school closures and limiting gatherings do not reduce COVID-19 mortality." More movement by D99 away from Draconian governmental mandates is good for all of us.....and it brings D99 Board Members closer to proper standing when "Duty of Care" liability issues arise from past harmful mandates. We encourage a review of other D99 positions in light of this positive step away from forced masking: 1) Take steps to comply with the spirit of the Open Meetings Act—return the D99 meetings to any of the larger venues available at Downers South. 2) Support our First Amendment rights to address D99 Board Meetings with fewer limitations. 3) Make an honest effort to correct the "Domestic Terrorist" designation that US Attorney General Merrick Garland used at the behest of the National Teachers Union to have the FBI add me to their "Domestic Terrorist" watch list. 4) Take into account the substantial community disapproval of CRT, EQUITY Politics and inappropriate sex ed agenda espoused by the LGBTQ political movement. 2 min 50 sec.....RB 2.14.22 3 min limit</p>
<p>Suma Rao-Gupta</p>	<p>The steps the District 99 School Board has taken so far with universal masking has been instrumental in keeping down infection rates in the high schools, and helping control community spread. Multiple published scientific studies have shown the effectiveness of masking in schools (compared to schools with no masking). Once the Covid positivity rates are low enough, and/or vaccination rates are high enough, it would make sense to relax masking requirements.</p>

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<p>Joanna Pawlikowska</p>	<p>I have a beautiful, amazing, smart and ambitious daughter at Downers Grove South. She knows every dog in my neighborhood and volunteers at a horse stable during her free time. My daughter wants to be veterinarian. That is her dream that she has been talking about since she was about 5 years old. When the TRO went through and then the school said they will not change their protocols I asked my daughter what she wants to do. She said she doesn't want to wear a mask, that she deserves a choice. Then I asked her if that is the case.. would she be going to school without a mask then. I didn't realize the severity of my question. She answered "now could I? What if they put this in my transcripts?" I didn't realize that I was asking my daughter to potentially give up her dream. My daughter had to choose between what she thought was right and her future. If this as educators does not bother you, then we have problem. If my daughters only choice is comply or else then some of you really need to read a history book.</p>
<p>Dawn Nowak</p>	<p>I am a nurse who worked in oncology with patients of severely immunocompromised patients with hardly any immunity. They cant even be around fresh flowers or fruit because they are so immunocompromised. These patients wear masks. They do not make everyone around them in stores, restaurants to wear masks. If someone is high risk, let them wear a mask. Not all students! This is not about transmission anymore. If there was that much of a concern about transmission then mask would not be allowed as optional everywhere. Our hate and anger is building in this community b/c this does not make sense anymore. Please make masks optional!</p>
<p>Frank Murphy</p>	<p>Thanks for all the hard work handling the pandemic for the schools. You have my sincere respect and thanks. You can count on my child to continue to follow the directives laid out by the board, agree or not.</p>
<p>Jennifer Rentner</p>	<p>I am very upset that this board member would claim healthcare workers are asking to keep masks on. As a healthcare worker that has worked throughout this from the beginning of this covid and seen what really was going on in the hospital. She has no idea and needs to keep us healthcare workers out of her personal fears to herself. She don't speak for us. As for these mask mandates a judge agrees with us for to move forward and mask optional. If this board continues to move forward for mask optional we will then pay the lawyer to be added in the lawsuit. Our daughter has been threatened in school 2 days and school refuses to stop the bullying. Vice Principal even went and told my daughter she is the reason she got threatened because she quietly protested in her seat to not wear a mask. Then she was put in a room with no windows and punished all day with no education. If the school mandates the vaccine we will then take steps to home school or move out of state. As a healthcare worker I personally now have health issues that need special dr's and I will not put my child in that boat for any school. I also now many having the same issues and the UK is now investigating these vaccines because of these issues too. We are not allowed to know what is even in the vaccine and nor can we sue anyone for damages from these vaccine companies. People feel unsafe then they can wear a mask. People not afraid and want to move on in peace we need to give people options. What does the difference of now or the 28 nothing at all other then this is just a control from politics. I am so disgusted that my sweet daughter that would never be rude was in fear to go to school that this has been emotional because this school is letting this divide continue. I also and very disgusted that my daughter was the victim and the school tried to say she was caused it. Hinsdale High schools, Downers Grade schools, Naperville schools, Clarendon Hills schools just to name a few all neighboring schools are now optional. So if District 99 won't go optional can we transfer our children to other schools? I am watching this meeting and I guess I will be signing up for the lawyer because this board is not listening !</p>
<p>Paul Glyman</p>	<p>As a concerned DG resident, friend and pastor to so many in our community... We respectfully ask you to allow the choice of masking to be up to the families and not force mandates on the students. Citing many surrounding districts such as Elmhurst , Lombard , Villa Park and others that made masking optional this past week . Students are very low risk for Covid but high risk for depression and suicide. My prayers are with you and the students of our community in these extraordinary times. Respectfully, Paul Glyman</p>

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DG99 School Board Members and Superintendent Theil:

We would like to make our thoughts on this topic known for being in support of the removal or optional masks for all students and employees of Downers Grove Community High School District 99.

As reference, Downers Grove District 58 has just lifted their mask policy, effective 2/14/22 and COD District 502 has lifted theirs, effective 2/28/2022.

Below is information regarding the change in policy regarding masks from both Dist. 58 and Dist. 502:

February 10, 2022

Dear District 58 Families and Staff,

The District 58 Board of Education held a Special Meeting on Thursday, Feb. 10 at Downers Grove Village Hall. The meeting comprised a Return to Learn update from Superintendent Dr. Kevin Russell, a one-hour public comment opportunity, and a Board discussion on District 58's COVID-19 mitigations.

Ultimately, the Board voted to adopt a resolution that makes the following changes to District 58's COVID-19 mitigation plan, effective Monday, Feb. 14:

1. District 58 recommends, but will not require, students and staff to wear a mask at school. Masks are still required on District transportation, per federal mandate.
2. District 58 will not require "close contacts" to stay home from school.
3. District 58 will not require unvaccinated District staff to submit to weekly testing.

Mary and
Artie
Kennedy

Please note: The Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) against Governor Pritzker's mask mandate has already been appealed, and motions to stay the TRO have been filed. It is possible that the TRO will be overturned. If the TRO is overturned, District 58 will immediately review and follow the court decision, and this might mean that District 58 will require masks in schools again. School districts that ignore or refuse to comply with state mandates risk losing accreditation, state funding and insurance coverage. This is not a risk District 58 is willing to take.

The updates outlined above will begin on Monday, Feb. 14 to give staff time to prepare and to have conversations with students. We ask all families and staff to please respect this decision and to continue to follow all COVID-19 mitigation measures, including wearing masks, while at school on Friday, Feb. 11.

Although masks will not be required starting next week, District 58 still strongly recommends all students, staff and school visitors wear a mask, in alignment with Illinois Department of Public Health guidance. The guidance also recommends a layered approach to removing mitigations, which is what District 58 will do. District 58's instructional spacing will remain at 3 feet, and lunch and recess will be handled in the same way as they are today. In addition, staff will maintain 6 feet of distancing in instructional spaces to the greatest extent possible. The District will also provide additional PPE, including KN95 masks, to staff upon request.

Finally, District 58 asks all families and staff to please respect one another's mask choices and to treat each other with kindness. District 58 teaches its students to be kind and respectfully requests everyone to lead by example.

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View the agenda. The meeting was livestreamed by the Village of Downers Grove; the Village will process the video and send it to District 58; as soon as we receive the video, we will promptly post it on the District 58 YouTube page.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Russell
Superintendent of Schools

February 11, 2022 3:41 PM
College of DuPage Colleagues:

As you may be aware, the Illinois Governor recently announced that the statewide requirement to wear masks indoors will expire on February 28, 2022, due to rapidly decreasing COVID-19 hospitalizations and high rates of vaccination. Some limited exceptions include K-12 schools, hospitals and nursing homes.

Today, the Illinois Community College Board shared that the lifting of the mask mandate DOES apply to higher education. However, the lifting of the mask mandate has NO impact on the vaccination/weekly testing requirement.

I will continue to keep you updated on the protocols for College of DuPage as we get closer to February 28.

Brian W. Caputo, Ph.D., C.P.A.
President
College of DuPage

We are requesting that DG99 consider our request and move along with the removal of mask, or make it optional for those that no longer wish to wear one.

Respectfully submitted by parents and community members of District 99,

Mary & Artie Kennedy

Public Comments Submitted via Google Form February 14, 2022 Board Meeting

Dear School Board members,

Thank you for scheduling this emergency meeting to discuss the recent TRO against the mask mandates in schools. I hope you will reconsider your current position on this matter.

The current inconsistencies, divisiveness and unscientific decision making needs to come to an end. You are creating a stressful environment for our students that borders on abusive. The scare tactics currently in place for our students choosing to stand up for their rights are despicable. Threatening to not allow them to make up their work, thereby affecting their grades; not allowing them to attend their extracurricular activities, denying them clean bathroom facilities, marching them in front of the rest of the student body like prisoners of war, etc are liken to demoralization warfare. Is this really how low you have sunk? Is this really how you as a board "promote excellence in a caring environment in which all students learn and grow"? Is this how you "empower all students to develop strong self-respect and to become responsible learners and decision-makers"?

You say you "follow the science" in your decision making. How can this be true when more and more research questions your position? The New York Times has reported that masks have little effect on COVID case loads. Research has clearly shown that Covid 19 poses less risk to children than the typical risks we expose them to on a daily basis. "Severe versions of Covid, including long Covid, are extremely rare in children. For them, the virus resembles a typical flu. Children face more risk from car rides than Covid." The research DOES unequivocally show that children are facing severe learning deficits because of the mask requirements, and the growing mental health crisis is shocking! Why would you continue to force this mandate upon our children knowing the risks and dangers to them? If a student feels uncomfortable for whatever reason, he/she has the option of wearing a mask to protect themselves from whatever evil they fear. With the availability of N95 masks and Covid vaccines, there is no reason to mandate masks in school. No one is asking that you disallow masks to be worn, only that you give students the OPTION to choose whether they wear a mask or not.

Please view the D58 board meeting from February 10, 2022. This was a respectful meeting, allowing the community to voice their opinions. I would hope that D99 will follow the example D58 has set for our students. They are clearly putting their students' well being first.

KATHY
STOPKA

It is time to prioritize our students' mental health, safety and educational environment rather than Dr Thiele and the School Board's political agenda. To quote your Belief Statements, "every individual possesses the potential for positive achievement; self-esteem is related to achieving one's potential; every person has worth AND DESERVES RESPECT; high standards stimulate achievement; all students can learn an essential body of knowledge and skills; SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS ADDRESS STUDENTS' INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS; A SAFE, POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT IS A PREREQUISITE FOR LEARNING; lifelong learning is necessary to thrive in a changing world; excellence in education is worth the investment; Education is a SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AMONG STUDENTS, PARENTS, THE SCHOOL, AND THE COMMUNITY".

I would also like to point out that while the current TRO can only be presently enforced against school districts named as defendants in the case, as to the students named as plaintiffs, the judge has ruled as a general matter that SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST PROVIDE DUE PROCESS OF LAW TO STUDENTS BEFORE MANDATING MASK OR EXCLUSION POLICIES. Her ruling puts all school districts, and their staff, on notice as to the illegality of their policies. Any school district continuing to enforce these illegal policies after her ruling are exposing their district, board members, administrators and staff to potential significant financial risk. Civil rights claims for knowingly violating constitutionally protected rights would possibly not be covered by the schools insurance policy leaving the district, board members, administrators personal assets exposed. Knowingly violating due process rights is a serious issue. This is why 300+ districts in Illinois have switched to mask optional policies. Perhaps you are continuing with these illegal policies in hopes that the appellate court disagrees with the trial court, but that is a gamble and if you are wrong you may very well be sued for civil rights violations against my child.

I implore you to change your position on the mask mandate at D99 and allow our students to choose. My son has not had a "normal" high school experience for two years and I (and he) would very much like him to enjoy the remaining three months of school.

Thank you,

Kathy Stopka

Public Comments Submitted via Google Form February 14, 2022 Board Meeting

Dear President Kupka, Board Members and Dr. Thiele:

I want to commend you on how you have led the District over the past two (2) years. I know and understand how hard your role in leading the District over these confusing and challenging times must have been and continue to be. I am writing to you in furtherance of staying the course and not flailing in the winds of political pressure, which often comes from the loudest voices, but, ironically, also the least informed.

I do not mean to presume what your actions will be at the upcoming special meeting on February 14th, but, from what the public can view, there will be a motion to amend the Mitigation Measures adopted by the Board at its workshop on August 2, 2021. Given the actions of some of the surrounding school districts I am a tad concerned as to the purpose and potential outcome of this special meeting.

At the 8.2.21 workshop, I understand that the Board voted to adopt the following Mitigation Measures: 8 period day; mask wearing following CDC/IDPH/DCDH guidelines, with the recommendation updated each Friday; and continuing to offer opportunities for students, staff and the community to be vaccinated. Also at said workshop, it was determined the best way to keep students at school as much as possible and to keep everyone safe was to follow federal, state and local guidance and to require universal masking indoors when the DuPage County Transmission Level is in the Substantial or High Transmission Level. The Board agreed to follow CDC guidance and use the county numbers to determine Transmission Level, which, as of the time of this writing, remains high.

As a parent and community member, I am very proud of how this policy has worked to date and hope and implore that these mitigation measures remain in place. Basing your Mitigation Measures on state and federal guidance from CDC/IDPH/DCDH is clearly the best route to follow. How can anyone, who is not otherwise motivated for political reasons, question your judgment if you continue to follow the lead of these organizations in these matters? As a school district you do not have the leisure of relying on epidemiologists who can help to guide your decision making independent of these organizations. Instead, you are reliant on the experts who study transmission of COVID-19 both nationally and locally. This makes perfect sense. I would hope and expect that you will continue to follow this guidance, and, as transmission levels subside, you can modify your Mitigation Measures accordingly, as you reasonably decided last August.

Don Renner

I am concerned that if you turn from this well reasoned and principled means of guiding your decision-making through this pandemic, in light of the district court's ruling from last Friday and ensuing nonsense that followed this week, you could jeopardize your integrity and ability to lead the District through the remainder of this pandemic (and likely endemic).

The facts remain true that masks protect against the spread of transmission of COVID-19, the CDC continues to recommend masks be worn in schools (although this could certainly change in the future), not all students/staff are vaccinated, some students who have certain health conditions remain vigilant to prevent contracting COVID-19 to preclude any serious health implications should they contract the same, and we do not know what future variants may be forthcoming or what transmission and mortality rates a new variant may hold. If the Board chooses to abandon the guidance of CDC/IDPH/DCDH at this juncture, please consider how this would negatively impact the Board's ability to reverse its course and return to Mitigation Measures based on the experts' guidance. In other words, if you allows masks to come off now (or you decide not to follow guidance with regard to contact tracing or close contacts), how will you ever enforce putting back in place Mitigation Measures in the future, when it may become even more critical to do so? I trust that you can see this would be very difficult and would call into question your leadership and credibility in the community's eyes; whereas, if you continue to hold to following the science, at least you will have maintained the integrity that you have preserved to date.

I trust that under the strong leadership of Dr. Thiele and Dr. Kupka, the Board will make the right decision in this regard.

Sincerely,

Don Renner
Parent of Freshman at DGN

Public Comments Submitted via Google Form February 14, 2022 Board Meeting

I am writing to implore District 99 to drop the mask mandate immediately.

There is no medical science (only political science) to show that masks prevent the spread of Covid-19 infection. The pores in masks are at least 1000 times larger in diameter (55 nm to 440 nm) as compared to the diameter of covid-19 virus particles (60 nm to 140 nm). Even the N95 mask packaging has label verbiage indicating protection that can only go down to 300 nano micron.

What masks worn all day in school is doing to our children is:

- Increase of fear of illnesses
- Increase in Anxiety disorders
- Increase in breathing resistance
- Increase in blood carbon dioxide
- Decrease in blood oxygen saturation
- Increase in heart rate
- Decrease in cardiopulmonary capacity
- Feeling of exhaustion
- Increase respiratory rate
- Difficulty breathing and shortness of breath
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Distraction
- Decrease in empathy perception
- Decrease in the ability to communicate
- Decrease in the ability to interpret and mimic expressions
- Positive emotions become less recognizable
- Negative emotions are amplified
- Emotional mimicry, contagion and emotionality are reduced and thereby decreased bonding between teachers and learners

Nicole
Cochrane

This physical and psychological child abuse has gone on for way too long!

The last 23 months of masking our children has resulted in an increase in mental health disorders, developmental issues, and a huge decrease in their capacity to learn.

District 99 is an institution that purports to teach truths and care about our children, yet this mandate and the politically driven false narrative that has been followed has failed and harmed our children greatly.

Mask mandates are now being lifted for adults in our State, so why would we continue to harm our children with all-day mask wearing when the risk of children dying from covid-19 (before vaccinations were even available) is 0.03%!!!!!!

Please put a stop to the masking of our children in school!

<https://www.aier.org/article/masking-children-tragic-unscientific-and-damaging/>

<https://www.aier.org/article/medical-journal-warns-about-maskss-potentially-devastating-consequences/>

<https://fee.org/articles/cdc-schools-with-mask-mandates-didn-t-see-statistically-significant-different-rates-of-covid-transmission-from-schools-with-optional-policies/>

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February 14, 2022 Board Meeting**

<https://wallethub.com/edu/states-coronavirus-restrictions/73818>

<https://madisonrecord.com/stories/619749195-omicron-shows-illinois-masks-and-mandates-aren-t-working-a-comparison-of-illinois-versus-its-neighbors>

<https://freedomwire.com/mask-mandate-covid-cases/>

<https://fee.org/articles/new-danish-study-finds-masks-don-t-protect-wearers-from-covid-infection/>

<https://reason.com/2022/02/07/that-study-of-face-masks-does-not-show-what-the-cdc-claims/>

<https://christianresearchnetwork.org/2021/04/19/stanford-study-quietly-published-at-nih-gov-proves-face-masks-are-absolutely-worthless-against-covid/>

<https://wsau.com/2021/04/20/stanford-study-results-facemasks-are-ineffective-in-blocking-transmission-of-covid-and-actually-can-cause-health-deterioration-and-premature-death/>

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Now is the time! District 99 should follow the lead of more than 550 Illinois school districts, 42 states, and almost all of the countries around the world, and adopt a mask optional policy today.

First and foremost, cloth masks do not work. Virtually every single credible study conducted on the topic has determined that mask wearing does not prevent the spread of Covid 19, particularly the Omicron variant. The only masks that might provide any benefit at all are not the ones worn by students.

Second, numerous studies have proven that mask wearing has substantial detrimental effects on students, including delays in learning, physical impairments, and social and emotional harm.

Third, it has been proven that students are at a very low risk for hospitalization or death from Covid 19. To date, not one person under the age of 20 in DuPage County has died from Covid 19.

Fourth, with the wide availability of vaccines, testing, and therapeutics, masks, even if they were effective, are no longer needed.

Fifth, under a mask optional policy, those students, teachers, and staff who want to continue masking are free to do so.

Finally, as recognized in a recent court ruling, a legal argument can be made that to force a mask on a student is to deny that student due process.

Numerous outlets, from NPR to The Atlantic to Bloomberg, now recognize that it is time to end mask mandates.

The Case Against Masks at Schools – The Atlantic
Masking: A Careful Review of the Evidence – AEIR

More than 150 Comparative Studies and Articles on Mask Ineffectiveness and Harms – Brownstone Institute

Did Mask Mandates Work? The Data Is In ... And the Answer Is 'No' – Bloomberg

Omicron shows Illinois masks and mandates aren't working: A comparison of Illinois versus its neighbors – Wirepoints

Evidence of Mask-Induced Brain Fog – Brownstone Institute

That Study of Face Masks Does Not Show What the CDC Claims – Reason

After 2 years, growing calls to take masks off children in school – NPR

Nicole
Leatherwood

These kids have been bearing the brunt of Covid policy for far too long. There isn't a valid justification backed by evidence to maintain this policy. End the mask mandate today!

Below is just a small sampling of sources:

"Our data indicate that children are at far greater risk of critical illness from influenza than from COVID-19." Source (JAMA Network)

"Children and young people remain at low risk from COVID-19 mortality." Source (OSF PrePrint)

"...children are not the main drivers of SARS-CoV-2 transmission." Source (CMAJ Group)

Children rarely transmit infection to others and more frequently have an asymptomatic or mild course compared to adults. Source (Journal of Medical Virology)

Asymptomatic spread in long-exposure, household settings was less than 1%. Source (JAMA Network)

"...could not provide evidence for a relevant asymptomatic spread... in childcare facilities... in a low nor a high prevalence setting." Source (MedRxIV)

"For adults living with children there is no evidence of an increased risk of severe COVID outcomes" Source (MedRxIV)

Increased household exposure to kids was associated w/ a smaller risk of testing positive or hospitalization w/ Covid Source (MedRxIV)

"...we did not note any association between mask use and risk..." Source (The Lancet)

"Evidence regarding the effectiveness of non-medical face masks for the prevention of COVID-19 is scarce." Source (ECDC)

"...people must not touch their masks, must change their single-use masks frequently or wash them regularly..." Source (BMJ)

The effectiveness of high-grade masks for flu was linked to correct usage. Source (NIH)

Children have a lower tolerance to wearing masks and may fail to use them properly. Source (ECDC)

"...household use of face masks is associated with low adherence and is ineffective for controlling seasonal respiratory disease." Source (EID)

"...it's difficult for some autistic people to wear masks because of sensitivity issues." Source (OAR)

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Deaf and Disabled children can feel isolated from other children and adults who are wearing masks. Source (The Guardian)
"Extended mask-wearing by the general population could lead to relevant effects and consequences in many medical fields." Source (MDPI)
"Psychosocial, biological, and immunological risks for children and pupils..." Source (BMJ)
School masks: face coverings could damage children's speech development, warn scientists. Source (The Telegraph)
"...wearing masks throughout the day can hinder language and socio-emotional development, particularly for younger children." Source (AAP)
A database tracking mask mandates has seen no clear benefit to masking children Source (Qualtrics Dashboard)
"...the data shows that districts' face covering policies do not impact the spread of the virus." Source (FL Education Board)
Delta does not seem to change the game No difference in risk of hospitalisation between Delta variant and Alpha Source (MedRxIV)
The viral dynamics of the Delta variant are similar to those of Alpha. Source (MedRxIV)
Studies in favor of school masking have been extremely flawed North Carolina study without a control group. Source (WSJ)
CDC (MMWR) studies have numerous flaws. Source (Thread)