



HADDON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

Broadcast

Dear Haddon Township School District Community,

I trust that this update finds you well and eagerly anticipating the end of February. Hopefully, yesterday's weather is a sign of things to come very soon. Please see below important district updates and have a great day.

Masks

As many of you know, Governor Murphy's executive order mandating masks to be worn in school will expire **on March 7th, 2022**, almost two full years after the onset of COVID-19. After several weeks of conversations with the New Jersey Department of Health, we received formal guidance yesterday, which helped finalize our safety planning and decision-making regarding this issue. Effective March 7th, 2022, face masks will be optional for students, staff, and visitors while in school **but required on school buses due to federal regulations**. Because this issue has been such a highly charged emotional topic, I feel compelled to provide you with some rationale for our decision.

- Governor Murphy maintains ultimate positional authority over the New Jersey Department of Education and the Commissioner of Education, who oversees safety, education, and compliance in all public schools. The spirit of the governor's executive order is that parents and individuals should now have the right to choose whether to wear a mask, following March 7th. For the last two years, our school district has followed all state mandates and complying with the mask optional personal choice simply continues our adherence to the mandate. ***As per the CDC guidelines, the Haddon Township School District will formally recommend that all individuals wear a mask indoors but not mandate it.***
- Over the last several weeks, the number of COVID-positive cases in our school district has decreased. Likewise, according to the New Jersey Department of Health, the Cali score has also declined. In a nutshell, our decision to transition to masks-optional is data-driven and supported by decreasing transmission levels. **Should the data change course or local school or classroom outbreaks occur, the district will reserve the right to return to required masking should unforeseen circumstances support this.**
- With the widespread availability of KN-95 masks, vaccines, and boosters, we have more tools that individuals can use to protect themselves compared to any other time of this two-year pandemic.

- Over the last several days, I have visited classrooms and talked with students about this issue. Many students have indicated that face masks have impeded their learning for a variety of reasons. Ultimately, we all work for the students in Haddon Township and considering many of their perspectives is essential when making decisions.
- Lastly, I am calling for school unity and universal respect on this issue of individual choice. The reality is that many individuals will continue to wear masks to maximize protection for themselves and their families, and others will not. **The district will not tolerate anything less than universal respect among all individuals.** This is an opportunity for growth in learning how to respect diverse beliefs and behaviors. I hope that parents will take the time and opportunity to talk with their children about this topic as a measure for conflict prevention.

(Note: Parents are encouraged to contact their school nurse to update their child's vaccination status. Individuals that are not up to date with their vaccine status and choose to be unmasked after March 7th will continue to be subject to our quarantine guidelines if identified as a close contact).

Survey

To maximize community participation for our strategic planning survey, we are making one final push to ask individuals to register. An ad was also placed in this week's Retrospect Newspaper. If you have not already registered for the survey, please do so here to **sign up**. Next week, you will receive the actual survey link in an email that will arrive from Anne Gemmell of *Future Works Alliance*, not the district.

Haddon Township Has Heart

I am very excited to announce our district-wide service-learning project of HT Has Heart. We are in the process of collecting various items for local families in need, and this is an excellent way for our school community to organize a coordinated community outreach project for all students and staff. Please see the flyer attached to this email. Thank you very much for considering this opportunity to participate. Special thanks to our school district counseling team, who lead this initiative.

Mark Your Calendars

Beauty and the Beast can be seen live on our stage **on March 3, 4 & 5**. Tickets are on sale now at showtix4U.com and can be purchased up to one hour before showtime but are selling quickly. **As of now, no tickets will be sold at the door, but this is currently under review and could change.**

A video of a pre-recorded performance will be available to stream **on March 18, 19, 25 & 26**. The stream can also be purchased at showtix4U.com

Mark Your Calendars Part II

Chris Herren has dedicated his adult life's work to spreading his inspiring story and will present it to high school students **on March 15th**. Later that evening, we will be hosting Chris for a NO COST presentation open to all parents and community members. **I ask you to mark this date of March 15th as a significant event on your calendars and consider attending.** Chris' story is unlike no other and having seen him speak, I can attest to the power of his message, which in my opinion should be heard by anyone raising a child. The Herren Project is part of a 3-way sponsorship between the Haddon Education Association, The Haddon Township Educational Foundation, and the Board of Education. For more about Chris Herren and his story, click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gAZ9aL30qOI&t=826s>

Thank you very much and have a great day.

-Sincerely,

Robert J. Fisicaro, Ed. D. Superintendent