



## WEST LONG BRANCH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

135 Locust Avenue  
West Long Branch, NJ 07764  
TELEPHONE: (732) 222-5900 FAX: (732) 222-9325

*Mrs. Christina M. Egan*  
Superintendent of Schools

June 2021

The Honorable Governor Murphy,

As we approach our last days of school, The West Long Branch School District reflects upon the 2020-2021 school year and looks forward to the 2021-2022 school year with hope and excitement. Together with the community we serve, our district has offered in-person instruction 5 days per week from the very first day in September. Our community has partnered with us in observing all necessary COVID-19 protocols and safety measures, and together we have progressed through the school year without any evidence of in-school transmission. We are appreciative of your efforts to provide access to vaccinations for those who want them, and as we continue our planning for next school year we look forward with hope to a greatly increase sense of normality and a return to our beloved traditions and best practices of instruction.

The lifting of the general indoor mask mandate on May 28th was a welcomed and heralded development, and a testament to the effects of our community's hard work in adjusting to new norms, adhering to quarantine guidelines, seeking and supporting others in finding access to vaccines through the stages of eligibility, and to the countless other ways we worked to take in stride the lifestyle changes that were required to see our communities safely through the worst of the pandemic. People, including children, are now permitted to sit in full-capacity theaters without social distancing, go to dinner with their families without capacity limits or masking requirements, and next week the Class of 2021 will celebrate their commencement without masks or social distancing. Children, including those too young to be eligible for vaccination, are not required to wear face masks in any indoor or outdoor settings – except for one. Our schools now remain the only spaces in which children must be masked at all times.

This inconsistency, coupled with the methods, timeliness, and clarity of communicating guidance for public schools, has unfortunately resulted in a great deal of confusion and frustration and a struggle throughout the state to comprehensively articulate what, precisely, is permissible under the law. As school officials, it is our responsibility to maintain consistency, adhere to policy, and operate within the confines of the law – and as such we rely on timely, clear, unambiguous guidance from those who define and provide such guidance. In the absence of consistency or clarity, those with varying viewpoints are left to interpret the guidance in individual and frequently widely varying ways, leading to unproductive and combative interactions.

Now that our state is experiencing consistently declining case rates, and upon the sunset of our public health emergency, we are writing today to request that you give consideration to the impact of the executive orders which are still in place. We hope that the requirement for children to wear masks in schools will be lifted so that the guidance for schools will line up with every other indoor environment that children encounter on a daily basis, where you and your health officials have already determined it to be appropriate and safe for families to choose the best path for their children. We believe that this would be in the best interest of our students, our community, and our schools. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Respectfully,

Christina Egan  
West Long Branch School District  
Superintendent of Schools

Christine Skellinger  
West Long Branch School District  
President of the Board of Education