



JANET QUINN <janet_quinn@msd.k12.wi.us>

Community communications for 11.8 board meeting

2 messages

Thomas Pearson <twpear@gmail.com>

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To: janet_quinn@msd.k12.wi.us

Cc: JOSEPH ZYDOWSKY <joe_zydowsky@msd.k12.wi.us>, christopher_freeman@msd.k12.wi.us, mark_hillman@msd.k12.wi.us, tanya_husby@msd.k12.wi.us, clinton_moses@msd.k12.wi.us, karl_palmer@msd.k12.wi.us, angela_skillings@msd.k12.wi.us, amy_riddle-swanson@msd.k12.wi.us, charlie_schneider@msd.k12.wi.us, dave_styer@msd.k12.wi.us

Dear SDMA board members,

Like all of you, I am relieved that the COVID-19 vaccine is now available for children over five years old. I trust that each of you recognizes the importance of vaccines and I hope the district will strongly encourage student vaccination as part of a multi-layered mitigation strategy.

As you are aware, the CDC currently recommends universal masking in schools regardless of vaccination status. This guidance is based on the continued high COVID-19 transmission rates in our community. It is also important to note that county health officials have not revised their recommendations for the school district.

As the district acknowledged ahead of its October 11th meeting, proposals to prematurely abandon the existing partial mask requirement are "not aligned with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Dunn County Health Department, the SDMA Medical Advisors, the SDMA District Administrator, the SDMA Administrative Team, the district's liability insurance carrier, and the advice of SDMA legal counsel." I know the SDMA has contracted new legal counsel since then, but I would assume their advice is similar and likely applies to both proposals under consideration tonight.

We continue to have a below average vaccination rate in our community, suggesting that some parents will be hesitant to vaccinate their children against COVID-19. To prematurely abandon essential mitigation strategies such as masking increases the risk of exposure for all students, even those who get vaccinated, who then go home to families where they have siblings who are too young to be vaccinated, grandparents who are medically vulnerable, parents who are nurses or doctors and treat ICU patients, and so on. Schools are embedded in communities and mitigating COVID-19 is a collective effort to protect the most vulnerable among us.

If the board chooses to put children at higher risk of exposure, it would also once again be disregarding the rights of students with disabilities to a free appropriate public education, a right which is protected by federal and state laws. By ignoring basic public health guidelines and regularly attempting to change existing policies, this board continues to deny children with disabilities and other medical vulnerabilities equal access to attending school in person.

I encourage the board to start following public health recommendations and let district medical advisors be the ones to determine when masks are no longer needed.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Pearson
Menomonie resident, parent of three children in the SDMA