Horseheads Central School District

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
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Dear Parents/Guardians:

On Tuesday, Governor Hochul announced that the state will be instituting a universal mask mandate in school buildings in response to the surge in the COVID-19 Delta variant across the state and in our communities. The governor also reported that specific safety guidelines will be coming to school districts later this week. As the district awaits this final guidance, we continue to plan for the new school year, with safety for our students, staff, and visitors our highest priority.

We have received messages from parents on both sides of the mask issue. With the governor's mask mandate, and with our board of education adopting a masking procedure affirming the State Education Department's recommendations, we ask for your understanding and cooperation as we weather this global pandemic. I know we all can agree that in-school instruction five days a week is best for our students, and if the district must institute a mask mandate to achieve this goal, we will do so. We do not wish to return to remote instruction, as has already happened in some parts of the country. Once this surge eases, we hope that the state may allow us for local decisions based on the data in our region.

In addition to a universal mask mandate in schools, the governor reported that there will be guidelines forthcoming for school staff members to be vaccinated or to test weekly. Our district staff has already risen to the strategy of vaccination and testing, and we will continue to meet this expected requirement. I am proud of our staff's attention to this prevention strategy.

Once we have received more information from the state, we will again contact you with updates for the start of the school year. Thank you for your continued vigilance, and for your care and support of our students and community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools