



October 5, 2021

Dear Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District Board of Education Members,

The Oak Creek-Franklin Joint School District, Oak Creek Health Department, and OCFSD Medical Advisor have collaborated throughout the pandemic with the shared goal of providing a safe, in-person learning environment for the district's students and staff. We appreciate this effort and hope to continue this critical mission going forward.

COVID-19 cases in Oak Creek have increased significantly over the past four weeks. As of 10/1/2021, Oak Creek is averaging 17 new cases of COVID-19 per day, while on 9/1/2021, Oak Creek was averaging 11 new cases daily. Oak Creek is also experiencing higher rates of COVID-19 than all other communities in Milwaukee County. The percent of cases among school-aged children in Oak Creek has also increased significantly since the school year began. In August, 21% of total COVID-19 cases in Oak Creek were among school-aged children, while in September, 34% of total COVID-19 cases in Oak Creek have been among school-aged children. Additionally, OCFSD is experiencing one of the highest rates of COVID-19 among students across Milwaukee County school districts. Over 270 students in OCFSD have tested positive for COVID-19 since school began on 9/1/2021. Many of these students have attended school while infectious, and as a result, the Oak Creek Health Department has issued over 3,300 quarantine directives to OCFSD students exposed to COVID-19. As of 10/4/2021, 638 students are currently within their quarantine period.

All students are entitled to a safe learning environment, and currently, students in the Oak Creek-Franklin School District are not learning in the safest environment. The Oak Creek Health Department has previously issued recommendations for the prevention of COVID-19 transmission in schools. We appreciate that OCFSD has employed some of these strategies, including making COVID-19 testing accessible to the OCFSD community and collaborating with the Oak Creek Health Department to conduct timely contact tracing in schools. However, we remain very concerned that several of the strongest mitigation strategies are not currently in place at OCFSD, including universal masking and quarantine of close contacts.

The most effective tool to prevent widespread in-school transmission of COVID-19 is the universal use of face masks by all students and staff. There is extensive evidence that masks work to limit the spread of COVID-19, including a study highlighted in a [recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)](#) that found that schools without a universal mask requirement were 3.5 times more likely to experience a school-associated COVID-19 outbreak than schools with a mask requirement. Masks should be required for all students, teachers, staff, and visitors unless there is a disability that prevents them from wearing one safely. Furthermore, if all students are wearing masks and

maintaining at least three feet of distance while at school, the number of close contacts needing to quarantine will be significantly decreased.

The Oak Creek-Franklin School District is hereby advised to implement the universal use of face masks for all students and staff, except when medically inappropriate. We must continue to work together to implement strategies to keep students, staff, and the community safe and to allow schools to continue to provide safe, in-person learning for students in the Oak Creek-Franklin School District.

Respectfully,



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