



BARNEGAT BOARD OF EDUCATION
BARNEGAT TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Mr. Sean O'Brien
BOE Board President

Dr. Brian Latwis
Superintendent of Schools

Richard Quelch
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August 16, 2021

Honorable Phil Murphy
225 West State Street
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy,

The Barnegat Township School District is focused on the health and safety of our students, staff and community. We have taken steps to protect our teachers and staff by making the vaccine available for those opted to be vaccinated. We have invested significantly in PPE, infrastructure improvements and training to return to full-day instruction. In many ways, you have entrusted the district with this responsibility by providing a framework for our district's reopening plan while allowing districts to operate within the individuality of our community.

We have consulted with our local union leadership to create clear and solid plans based on our local data. The decision matrix started as a way to help the community and staff understand how decisions are made when planning virtual or in-person learning. The matrix has evolved to best support the children, staff and families of our district. Now it can help in our decisions on screening and PPE requirements as well. For your reference, we have enclosed a copy of our district's matrix. You will notice some text is currently in red as the school year has not yet started; the matrix will be updated weekly. This matrix will allow us to continue to lead our community in the right direction.

As the number of vaccinated individuals increases in Ocean County, we continue to monitor the data in our individual town. The daily case count for our district continues to be significantly lower than in the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year. We realize this situation is fluid and are ready to continue taking steps to get us closer to normal. As of now, Executive Order 251, as well as the recommendation by the CDC on masks, requires those in schools to continue wearing masks. As always, our district will operate in compliance with all state mandates.

With that being said, we believe we are at a point when the state policy regarding students and staff wearing masks at school – both indoors and outdoors – could be responsibly re-evaluated. In Ocean County we support a consideration for masks to be left to the local school district administration, as long as data continues to trend in the right direction. We base our position on the latest local and federal data as well as the proactive steps we've taken to increase vaccination rates in our school communities. We believe we could safely take the next big step in getting back to normal. Within our respective reopening plans we urge you to allow districts to decide if masks are a **necessity** based on local data. We welcome state leadership's support in choosing responsible data driven metrics that will enable our local school districts to make the best decision for their local community.

Respectively,

Sean O'Brien
Board President