

**August 25, 2021**

**Dear Parents and Guardians,**

**On August 9, 2021, the RSU 16 School Board approved a return to 5 days in-person instruction plan that requires all three elementary schools to have mandatory masking for all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status. All staff and students in PreK-6 will be required to wear a mask until a vaccine is available for ages 2-11. Once the vaccine is available for ages 2-11, PreK-6 staff and students will continue to wear face masks for 60 days.**

**The RSU 16 leadership and the School Board have received feedback from parents, guardians and community members on the masking decision. RSU 16's obligation is to carry out the approved plan, closely monitor COVID school and community data, and propose changes to the plan when necessary.**

**Our schools are ready for your children! Shiny floors, desks for a full classroom, and bulletin boards to show students how much we have missed all of them in our buildings at one time. Even more so, our staff is ready to have all students in their classrooms, cafeteria, buses and buildings. It's been since March 2020 since our buses have delivered a full bus to school for five days a week. We cannot be more excited!**

**However, as a community we face a major divide over masking. We ask all parents and guardians not to place their children in a position that puts them in non-compliance to the mask mandate for the elementary schools and on RSU 16 transportation. Please send your students ready to follow and comply with all existing rules, especially the masking policy, even if you disagree with the decision. All students being transported by the bus must have on a mask in order to ride the bus. If at the bus stop a student does not have a mask, the driver will supply one.**

**Our students deserve a positive start to the school year. If you disagree with the mask mandate there are avenues for you to address your concerns, such as contacting the Superintendent, School Board Chair or attending the next School Board meeting. Our students, your children, deserve a cheerful, joyful transition between the bus stop or drop off and entering our buildings.**

**Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.**

**Sincerely,**

**Ken Healey and Amy Hediger**