

## Press Clippings 08/10/21

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**U-46 board finalizes mandatory mask policy, tells Sanders to draft plan for when rules can be retracted**

**by Mike Danahey**

**Note: This article also appears on the Chicago Tribune's website**

**District U-46 School Board** members endorsed the superintendent's plan to have all students, staff and visitors wear masks while inside district buildings and directed him to come up with a system for when restrictions can be rolled back.

The resolution, approved Monday night in a 5-1 vote, authorizes **Superintendent Tony Sanders** to work with local health departments to develop a system through which data can be accumulated to determine when pandemic restrictions are implemented or removed.

Unvaccinated students and staff will be tested using a voluntary opt-in system and all positive cases will be monitored, quarantines implemented as necessary, transmission rates in district counties and Zip codes tracked, and vaccination rates for students and staff kept, according to the resolution.

The data will be used "to develop metrics that can be used to determine when prevention strategies, including social distancing, mask usage and limitation of visitors to schools, can be incrementally reduced when data suggests it is safe to do so," the resolution said.

Sanders said he has been working with the health departments for the three counties in which district schools are located — Kane, DuPage and Cook — but has not been provided all the information needed.

Board member Dawn Martin cast the only negative vote, saying she believed some things in the resolution were better left to the county health departments than the district superintendent.

U-46 classes start Aug. 16, and masks for all grade levels and staff members will be mandatory and other pandemic-related protocols in place.

That mirrors Gov. J.B. Pritzker's executive order, issued last week following another spike in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Students, coaches and spectators at extracurricular activities also must wear masks per the order.

“As long as the executive order is in effect, we have to follow it,” School Board President Sue Kerr said.

As of right now, only those who are 12 or older can be vaccinated for the virus.

The governor’s mandate and Sanders’ back-to-school plan are in line with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Cook, DuPage and Kane county health departments.

Board member Melissa Owens said she was thankful the district was already planning on mandatory mask usage and other mitigation efforts, but not all those who attended Monday’s meeting agreed.

Fourteen people made public comments Monday night against the mask requirements. No one present spoke in favor of them although of the 20 written comments submitted to the board, 14 favored the mandatory mask policy, Kerr said.

District resident Angie Rol Vel Rul said making children wear masks in school was a violation of their Constitutional rights while Corina Gomez told the board that “zero data supports making children wear masks in schools.”

The latter claim does not jibe with information provided by local health departments or studies that have been done, [such as one by Duke University researchers](#), who found that “wearing masks is an effective strategy to prevent in-school COVID-19 transmission.”

Michael Pajeau submitted a letter to the board saying he supports the district’s mask rule.

“I sincerely believe (and science fully supports) universal masking and vaccination as the best course for preventing the spread of COVID, including dangerous new variants that spread when precautions are not taken,” Pajeau said. “We must not allow the unfounded fears and misplaced trust of those refusing to wear masks and vaccination to derail our community’s, our state’s, our country’s recovery from this pandemic any longer.”