



Smethport Area School District

Administration Office

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November 10, 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians, Caregivers, and Students,

On Wednesday, November 10, 2021, the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court issued a ruling voiding the Department of Health issued order mandating the use of masks/facial coverings for students and staff in all K-12 public and private schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The PA Department of Health has filed an appeal with the PA Supreme Court, which immediately "stays" or holds in place the masking order issued on August 31 by the Acting Secretary of Health, until the appeal proceedings conclude. As such, the Governor's appeal acts as an automatic stay to the Commonwealth Court's Order of November 10, 2021. Thus, the Mask Order remains in effect as of 2:30 PM this afternoon pending the final disposition of the appeal in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Students, staff, and visitors will still need to wear a facial covering while this Mask Order is in effect.

If the PA Supreme Court upholds the lower court's ruling, Smethport Area SD will return to our original Health and Safety Plan. Our board-approved Health and Safety Plan called for face coverings to be optional while inside school buildings. Governor Wolf indicated this week that he plans to return the issue of mask/facial coverings in school to the local level of control on January 17, 2022.

I would like to commend our students and staff members for their cooperation as changing public health guidelines have been a source of frustration. This fall we have kept our schools open for in-person learning, kept our Hubber athletic and extra-curricular teams competing without cancelled games and competitions due to COVID-19 cases within our school community, and managed a safe environment for students and staff amid a surge of COVID-19 case counts in McKean County. Our priority remains an excellent in-person education in a safe learning environment.

We will update all of you on any changes in the coming days as the appeal process unfolds with the PA Supreme Court.

Thank you for your time. Go HUBS!

Sincerely,

Mr. Brice N. Benson
Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Brice N. Benson
Superintendent

Mr. Jeffrey S. Wagner
Business Manager

Mr. Douglas Dickerson
High School Principal

Ms. Kristin J. Zona
Elementary Principal

Mrs. Kerri J. Dach
Director of Special Education

Mrs. Anna M. Stewart
Assistant Principal

Mr. Kevin C. Kolivoski
Technology Coordinator