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Subject: Return to School Plan

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Dear Board of Education Members,

Last night was a wealth of information and we are so fortunate for Dr. Hobaugh and the entire committee that have spent hours preparing and organizing a plan for a safe and healthy return to school for all students and staff. Thank you to all the board members for their valuable insight and help as well.

One important issue that we feel still needs to be addressed further is the need to have students wear masks 100% of the time while indoors at school (minus snack time and mask breaks outdoors). This should absolutely include the time students will be working at their desks. As the plan states now, students will not be required to wear a mask while working at their desks. We understand student desks will be distanced 6 feet apart and all desks will be facing the same direction. However, we feel this is not good enough and risks students' health. While we figured we would be given the option for our kids to wear one if they wanted to - it's the kids that *don't* wear masks that are putting others at risk by spreading it. This has been a common thread that we have all learned during this whole pandemic - wearing a mask is how you protect *someone else* from getting sick.

Yes, we agree it will be challenging for the students to keep them on and for teachers to help reinforce it, but it seems we are already assuming they can't do it even before we tried. It is also our assumption that the High School is requiring masks at all times for students.

Some may say, well if you don't like the part-time mask wearing then keep your child home and learn virtually. It seems it should be a safe environment for all students that want to return to school and be a level playing field for all. We want our children to return and once again be a part of the wonderful High Bridge staff and learning community.

Our hope is that the Board of Education is able to strongly re-evaluate the mask requirement within the elementary and middle school and make it a requirement for all students to wear one while working at their desks as well as moving around the classroom/building.

Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,
Jessica and Jeff DeRose