

To the families of the Byron Center, Dutton, and Legacy Christian Schools,

As a collection of school boards, we are looking forward to providing a quality Christ-centered education for our children this year. With approximately 1500 students being trained to be servants of the King in our three south suburban Christian schools in Kent county, we are blessed!

We know most of you are aware that the administrative health officer in Kent County issued a public health order requiring masks to be worn in pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade educational settings. This health order does pertain to Christian and private schools under the public health code, and it is legally binding and enforceable.

Our school boards have spent time reviewing the mandate and praying for wisdom and discernment. We are also grateful for the prayers of those in our communities offered over the last few days. Our school boards met independently to determine each school's response to the mandate. Because our school boards independently arrived at similar decisions; and because we live in and educate as a community of Christ-centered schools, this joint letter expresses our unified response.

At this time, we are striving to follow the mandate by requiring our students, and those providing services to them, in prek-6th grade to wear masks while inside our school buildings unless:

- Persons are eating or drinking.
- Students are under the age of four years.
- Students are in their classrooms.
- Students have developmental conditions of any age attending school for whom it has been demonstrated that the use of a face covering would inhibit the person's access to education. These are limited to persons with an Individualized Education Plan, Section 504 Plan, Individualized Healthcare Plan or equivalent.
- Vaccinated teachers are working with children who are hard of hearing or students with developmental conditions who benefit from facial cues.
- Teachers are socially distant in their classroom.
- Persons have a medical reason confirmed in writing from a Medical Doctor (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) currently licensed to practice medicine in the State of Michigan.
- Students are in 7th or 8th grades, where the use of facial coverings is recommended by the MDHHS but not required.

We will continue to obtain counsel and determine how the exceptions may apply to particular situations, and we will communicate with parents and others who may be affected. We are currently seeking clarity on components of this public health order as there are questions surrounding it. We will also seek clarity for our preschool students as our early childhood programs are licensed by the Bureau of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

The current order is effective immediately and remains in effect:

- until 60 days past the date COVID-19 vaccine is authorized or approved by the FDA and available to persons in pre-kindergarten through grade six, or
- until community transmission for Kent County is categorized as "Low" by the CDC for at least seven consecutive days, or
- until further notice from the Administrative Health Officer.

It is our hope and prayer that community spread of COVID-19 will decrease to the levels that we saw in early to mid-summer so that this order can be rescinded.

As a group of boards, we know the challenges of receiving this information on the Friday before school starts. We have been proactively preparing for this order, but the timing did not give us much time to evaluate and respond to it. We ask for your grace and patience as we implement changes. We also know that this will be another year requiring adaptability and flexibility. This plan will be implemented beginning tomorrow, subject to changes as we continue to seek answers to questions and receive further clarity from the Kent County Health Department.

We ask you to pray for us as we seek to follow God's will with each and every decision that we make. We also ask that you model respect to our teachers and administrators and ask that your children do the same. They are here to serve our children and have been put in difficult positions. We recognize that our community members hold a range of viewpoints and it is our hope that our school communities can come together in unity and love for one another. As they do every year, our teachers will continue to work with each individual child so they know that they are loved and are God's handiwork, so they develop a hope that rests in Him alone. We pray for a spirit of unity and peace as we look forward to another year of equipping students to serve and glorify our King.

Serving Him,
The Legacy Christian School Board
The Dutton Christian School Board
The Byron Center Christian School Board