

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Our Community. Our Environment.

3415 28th Street Port Huron MI 48060

August 4, 2020

Dear Parents,

As we work through the impacts of COVID 19 there are a few strategies we know work: social distancing and masks. Although neither effort is a guarantee to prevent an infection, we know that the more people who practice these precautions, the slower the spread of the virus will be. And slower transmission means schools can stay open, businesses can function, and most importantly lives will be saved.

Our K-12 students are also **required** to wear masks at school to help limit the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 virus. The requirements for students are detailed in the MI Safe Schools Roadmap and vary a bit depending upon age and/or grade level:

1. All K-12 grade students must wear a mask on school buses and in common areas such as hallways and shared bathrooms.
2. All K-12 students must wear a mask if they display symptoms of COVID-19 and are sent to wait in the school's "clinic" room
3. All K-5 grade students must wear a mask during recess if more than one classroom is on the playground
4. All 6-12 grade students must wear a mask during the entire school day except when eating or if a class meets outside and social distancing of at least 6 feet can be observed.

And yet we understand that wearing a mask should not be used by a very limited number of students and/or staff members with specific medical conditions. Medical conditions that limit mask-wearing must be reviewed with your doctor and, when medically necessary, a waiver should be obtained which identifies the specific medical condition that prevents mask-wearing and also indicates how long the restriction should last. However, we also know those who are most at risk from COVID19 are the ones who would benefit from wearing a mask the most. Also, wearing a mask does not put people at risk for low oxygen or elevated carbon dioxide levels...these are fears spread by social media and are absolutely not true! On the other hand, it is quite normal to feel "hot" or "claustrophobic" while wearing a mask...feeling comfortable wearing a mask does not come naturally! Rather we need to find different sizes and styles that fit AND to gradually increase the time we spend wearing them. MASKS ARE DEFINITELY OUR FRIENDS DURING THIS PANDEMIC!

There are many situations that we will face as we try to get our students back to school over the coming months. Many of these are challenges we have never faced before. Our local school districts are currently creating "Return to School" plans to address these challenges and will share many more details, including additional tips for helping our students acclimate to wearing masks. I am confident that together we can get through this with courage and compassion. What we do and how we treat each other, especially our most vulnerable, is the greatest teacher. It is what our children will remember most.

Sincerely,



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