

# Winn Parish School Board

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## Winn Parish School Board Statement Regarding Wearing of Face Coverings

Governor John Bel Edwards' Proclamation of August 2, 2021 requiring all students to wear masks while at school has become a source of heated debate in every community across the state. It is an issue upon which everyone does not and never will agree. At this point, the issue is not "what is my opinion or what is that of our Board members." Rather, the issue is whether the district must follow the Governor's mandates.

Our legal counsel has advised us that we are obligated to comply with the Governor's Proclamation and that ignoring it may jeopardize our ability to enjoy the immunities granted by the legislature to protect our public funds. In addition, the legal authority of the Governor to issue such orders during health emergencies like the COVID pandemic was upheld twice last year—once in a state court ruling affirming the Governor's mask mandate and again in a United States Fifth Circuit decision related to his order closing bars and restaurants. As the Governor also pointed out, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), and local health officials have all recommended that persons within school buildings wear masks.

Finally, we cannot lose sight of our goals: (1) to keep our students and employees safe, and (2) to keep our schools open. We know that students learn better in the actual classroom and that they gain important social skills when they interact with each other in person. The use of masks will allow us a greater chance at achieving those goals. The latest quarantine rules under which we will operate this year provide:

"If both the [positive] case and the contact are engaged in consistent and correct use of **a well-fitting face mask** AND were within 3 to 6 feet of each other, **then those close contacts do not need to quarantine.**"

As Superintendent and as Board members, we took an oath to follow the law. That oath does not afford us the option of choosing which laws to comply with and which to dismiss, much like we do not afford our students the option of determining which school rules they will follow. We ask for everyone's cooperation as we open for a new school year.

Respectfully,



Alfred L. Simmons  
Superintendent of Schools

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