



# Hopatcong Borough Schools

**Joseph S. Piccirillo**  
*Superintendent of Schools*  
**Alex McLean**  
*President of the Board of Education*

**Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow.**

August 16, 2021

Dear Governor Murphy,

On June 1 we sent a letter to your office expressing our desire to have a consistent message from the State of New Jersey regarding the opening of schools this September. At the time of our letter, COVID numbers were waning and there appeared to be hopeful signs pointing to the end of the pandemic. As we write to you today, we recognize and understand that there has been an unfortunate surge in the Delta variant which has left many concerned. Within Executive Order #251 you have instituted a mask mandate for all students and staff, going above and beyond the recommendations put forth by the CDC. Additionally you have stated that remote learning for students will no longer be available with the exception of students in quarantine. This messaging seems to indicate that schools are safe as long as students mask up. There is dissonance in this messaging, however, when the State of New Jersey itself does not have a mask mandate. Our students and staff members participate in a wide variety of activities outside of a school setting and many in our community are left wondering why schools seem to have unique and separate requirements; and why, if the position is to attempt to be overly cautious when it comes to the spread of COVID, a completely remote option for students would remain off the table.

As we stated in our previous letter, we do not envy your job. We understand that as the governor of our wonderful state you have to weigh many different factors when making a decision. But, if these many factors prevent you from having a consistent message for our community, we would respectfully ask that you remove the mandates and give the control back to local decision makers -- such as the Board of Education -- in decisions related to masks and how (and by what means) we educate our students. While some may make this into a conservative vs. progressive issue, that is not our intent. If the executive orders remain in place, we will follow the law and do our duty. Our only position is that we -- the community -- know what is best for our students and staff and we -- the community-- would like the opportunity to make those decisions.

Respectfully,

Joseph S. Piccirillo  
*Superintendent of Schools*

Alex McLean  
*President, Hopatcong Board of Education*