SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS **Administration Offices**

465 South Union Street, Sparta, MI 49345 Phone (616) 887-8253
Peter W. Bush, Superintendent Fax (616) 887-9958

August 23, 2021

Dear Spartan Parents & Families:

Following the public health order that was issued by the Kent County Health Department on Friday, August 20, and our Board of Education meeting on Sunday night, our district will begin school tomorrow (Tuesday, August 24) and will be following the order as it is written. Our Board did vote to pursue any and all legal options at their disposal to challenge the legality of this order, but will continue to follow the order until a legal remedy is available.

What this means for our students in Preschool through 6th grade is that they will be required to consistently and properly wear a facial covering (mask) while inside our school buildings, and this includes staff members that provide service directly to those students. Students/staff will not have to wear a mask while eating or drinking (breakfast/lunch) or when they are outdoors for recess, drop-off/pick-up, gym class, or any other outdoor learning activity. The only available exemptions to this order are for persons that have a medical reason confirmed from an MD or DO (copy must be provided to the school in writing) or for students that have a demonstrated developmental condition (documented through their IEP, 504, or health care plan) that would inhibit their access to education. There are not any religious exemptions available at this time through this order.

Students and staff in grades 7-12 are recommended to wear a facial covering (mask) while indoors, but this is not mandated as a part of this order.

All students (PK-12) are required to wear a face covering to get on a school bus, per federal mandate, and our schools must report any positive cases of COVID, post the information on our website, contact trace any close contacts to a positive case, notify parents of that close contact, and enforce quarantine requirements imposed by the health department, per their previous order.

We understand that many parents do not agree with the public health order, and we encourage you to continue to reach out to representatives at the county and state level that have the ability to effect change at their level, but we ask that this current reality not be taken out on our staff that works so diligently to provide positive educational opportunities for your children. We are ready to welcome all students that arrive at our doors tomorrow morning, and will continue to go above and beyond to help them learn. We just are not able to allow students in grades PK-6th grade to be in school unless they are following the public health order and wearing a mask properly.

Additionally, we ask all parents to screen your children before reporting to school. If they are not feeling well or demonstrate any symptoms of COVID, please DO NOT SEND THEM TO SCHOOL!! Please contact the school office to report an absence and any symptoms we may need to be aware of.

We will also continue to encourage hand-washing, the use of sanitizer, respiratory etiquette, and the cleaning/disinfecting of the classroom and high-touch surfaces. Our custodial staff will clean all common areas and high-touch surfaces throughout the day and at night to keep things as clean as possible.

Please continue to share your questions or concerns with our school board members and our district leadership team. Our Board of Education is committed to do our best to keep students safe and provide a positive environment for them to learn and grow!!

Sincerely,

Peter W. Bush, Superintendent &
Sparta Area Schools Board of Education