



**WAKE COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Christopher J. McCabe
Northern Area Superintendent

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November 5, 2021

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Arthur,

This letter serves as the Level II Grievance response to your grievances on behalf of your children: Ella and Samantha at Lead Mine Elementary and Andrew at Carroll Middle School. I have been designated by the Superintendent to perform the Level II review of this grievance under Board Policy 1740. As part of my review, I met with you, reviewed documents submitted by you and correspondence that has been exchanged between you and each school, spoke to the principals of each school, and consulted Dr. Hensen.

To summarize the timeline of events, on August 2, 2021, you sent a letter to the Board of Education arguing that masks are harmful and ineffective for all children and should not be required. In mid-August you submitted a request to your children's schools that your children be exempted from the mask mandate due to your religious and personal beliefs. This request was denied. On or about September 3 you submitted to Lead Mine Elementary and Carroll Middle three mask accommodation request forms signed by Mark A. Huminski, a chiropractor in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The forms for Ella, Samantha and Andrew all contained identical language, stating that "the aforementioned student suffers from chronic cervicgia that causes headaches. This condition is aggravated by wearing a mask." The principals at both Carroll and Lead Mine denied this request, although they continued to offer other accommodations short of a total exemption.

You then submitted new mask accommodation request forms for all three children. All of the forms were accompanied by copies of a single letter from Dr. Hensen, an ENT located in Texas. The letter does not mention any of your children by name but does reference "my 3 patients" and states in general terms that they complained of some of what he believes are common symptoms from mask-wearing. After reviewing this letter, each principal again denied your request for a total mask exemption, while offering other accommodations for any health issues the children may experience at school. You then filed this grievance. Each principal met with you and then issued a Level I grievance response in writing within the timeline in Board Policy 1740. You submitted a written appeal to the Superintendent on behalf of all three children, and the Superintendent designated me to investigate and respond.

As part of my investigation, Paul Koh and I met with you on Wednesday, October 20 at 10:00 AM to discuss your concerns. In this meeting you explained your objections to the principals' decisions and your belief that masks are harmful to your children. In our meeting, you acknowledged that you have sought out medical professionals who are like-minded, in that they share your belief that masks are not effective, and you stated that you do not intend to seek medical treatment from your child's pediatrician for the issues identified. These are certainly decisions that are well within your rights as parents. However, we are left with letters from a doctor who clearly believes that no children should wear masks under any circumstances. Dr. Hensen's letter does not reflect any individualized medical diagnosis with regard to any of your children, beyond noting that one daughter has a history of asthma.

With your permission, I called Dr. Hensen on November 1, accompanied by Kelly Creech, Senior Director of Health and Crisis Prevention Services and Paul Koh, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services. Our first question for Dr. Hensen was whether the students have a medical condition that would make them unable to wear a face covering during the day, and his first response was that no one should wear a face mask, period. He acknowledged that he has met the children only once, virtually, in September 2021,

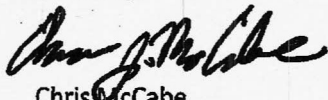
and is not treating them for any chronic medical conditions. He forcefully reiterated his belief that masks are bad for all children and adults.

After reviewing the records including the information you presented and speaking to Dr. Hensen, my decision is that the decisions of the principals should be upheld. I understand your objection to school system staff who are not doctors disagreeing with a letter from a doctor and one from a chiropractor. However, it is clear that Dr. Hensen's letter is based on his belief that no children should ever wear face coverings, and not any unique medical conditions suffered by your children. As you know, WCPSS has adopted its face covering requirement under the advice of the medical and public health professionals at the Wake County Health Department, NC Department of Health and Human Services, and ABC Collaborative. All of these medical professionals have advised that cloth face coverings are safe and effective for children, with specific exceptions for individual children who have diagnosed medical conditions or disabilities that prevent them from safely wearing a face covering. Because Dr. Hensen's letter conflicts so directly with the overwhelming consensus of the medical and public health experts advising WCPSS, I support the principals' decision not to rely upon his recommendation on the topic of face coverings at school.

I understand that both principals have offered to consult with your children's treating pediatrician regarding any medical needs they may have at school, to provide or update school health plans if warranted by a particular diagnosis, and to offer other accommodations short of a total exemption (such as mask breaks). I support these efforts and encourage you to communicate with school staff about how to support your children if they suffer headaches or other symptoms at school.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may pursue further review through the process outlined in Policy 1740(E)(4).

Sincerely,



Chris McCabe

WCPSS Northern Area Superintendent

Cc: Keith Sutton, WCPSS Board of Education Chair

Cathy Moore, Superintendent

Jacqueline Ellis, Chief of Schools

Paul Koh, Assistant Superintendent Student Support Services