

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
OF ORONO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 278  
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

The Special Meeting of the Board of Education of Orono Independent School District No. 278 was held on Thursday, September 2, 2021 and called to order by Board Chairman, Bob Tunheim, at 5:00 PM.

Present: Bob Tunheim Mike Bash Martha Ven de Ven Ali Howe  
Laura Wallander Sarah Borchers Kristine Flesher

Absent: None

3. – Community Members' Questions and Comments

Several members of the community addressed the board.

4. – Safe Return to School Plan

Dr. Aaron Ruhland, Director of Learning and Accountability and Dr. Scott Alger, Director of Human Resources, shared with the board an update to the 'Safe Return to School Plan'.

5. – Resolution Requiring Universal Masking and Delegating Authority to Superintendent

School Board Member Martha Van de Ven introduced the following Resolution and moved its adoption:

**RESOLUTION REQUIRING UNIVERSAL MASKING AND  
DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO SUPERINTENDENT**

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a public health concern in our society and in school settings, where vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals congregate indoors;

WHEREAS, the School Board has considered the potential benefits and potential costs of requiring face coverings for students, employees, volunteers, and visitors in its schools and at school sponsored events and activities;

WHEREAS, the School Board has specifically considered the potential health and educational benefits of face coverings, which may help limit disruptions to in-person learning and the need for students and staff to quarantine;

WHEREAS, the School Board has also specifically considered the potential social, political, and financial costs associated with requiring face coverings;

WHEREAS, the School Board has also considered the most recent guidance that that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) have issued;

WHEREAS, the School Board recognizes that the guidance from federal and state authorities, including the CDC and the MDH, will likely change as the virus continues to mutate and as vaccine rates and infection rates change;

WHEREAS, after weighing the potential risks and benefits, the School Board has decided to require face coverings in schools at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year based on the information that is available at the time of the School Board's vote; and

WHEREAS, the School Board believes that the Superintendent must have the authority, flexibility, and professional discretion to remove the face covering requirement at some or all of the District's schools if new developments occur locally, across the state, or across the nation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Independent School District No. 278, Orono, as follows:

1. All students, employees, volunteers, and visitors within all Independent School District 278 buildings must wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status. This resolution shall be considered a reasonable School Board regulation for all purposes, including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. Requests for reasonable accommodations for individuals who have a medical condition or disability related condition will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

**Facial Coverings Expectations:**

Pre-K – Grade 8: That students in pre-K (age 2 or older) through grade 8 and all staff, volunteers and visitors working in these schools, as well as the Orono Discovery Center, be required to wear facial coverings inside the building on school days between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Wearing of masks in buildings outside of these hours is still recommended but not required unless otherwise communicated.

Grades 9-12: That students in grades 9-12 and all staff, volunteers and visitors working within Orono High School be required to wear facial coverings inside the building on school days between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. (exception made for indoor physical education classes engaged in physical activity where greater distancing can occur, and for designated MSHSL after-school activities). Wearing of masks in the building outside of these hours and during indoor physical education classes is still recommended but not required unless otherwise communicated.

Orono Transition: That students in the Orono Transition program and all staff, volunteers and visitors working at the school, be required to wear facial coverings inside the Orono High School.

Outdoors: Students in pre-K through grade 12 and transition, and school staff are not required to wear facial coverings outdoors for recess, physical education classes, athletic practices/contests and/or any other outdoor instructional or recreational activities.

School Buses: Students riding on school buses to and from school, to special events, field trips, athletic events or any other activity, are required to wear a facial covering, as per federal law.

Exemptions: Facial coverings will not be required to be worn while a student, employee, volunteer, and/or visitor is eating, drinking or if grounds exist for an exemption due to certain medical conditions, as may be established under the ADA process.

2. The School Board hereby delegates to the Superintendent the authority to remove the face covering requirement for students, employees, volunteers, and visitors at some or all of the District's schools and at events and activities held on school property, if the Superintendent concludes, based on new developments and her professional judgment, that the removal of such a facial requirement is necessary or appropriate. The Superintendent must bring any such decision to the School Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the School Board. The Orono Schools COVID Response Team will study all internal and external health metrics for decision making and recommendations to the Superintendent.

The motion for the adoption of this Resolution was duly seconded by School Board Member Laura Wallander and upon a vote being taken, the following School Board members voted in favor of the Resolution: Bob Tunheim, Sarah Borchers, Mike Bash, Martha Van de Ven, Ali Howe, Laura Wallander

And the following School Board members voted against the Resolution: None

Based on the vote, this Resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Member Sarah Borchers motioned to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Orono School Board.

The motion to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Orono School Board was duly seconded by member Laura Wallander.

And upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof: Bob Tunheim, Mike Bash, Sarah Borchers, Martha Van de Ven, Ali Howe, Laura Wallander

And the following voted against the same: None

Whereupon said motion was declared duly passed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.



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*Bob Tunheim, Chair*



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*Martha Van de Ven, Clerk*