

November 8, 2021

Dear School Board:

Now that vaccinations for 5-11 year-olds have become available in many places, the board is understandably looking to see when it would be appropriate to end the mask requirement for 4k-6 in accordance with the recent policy that such requirement would be in effect until children had the opportunity to become fully vaccinated.

Many parents I know called first thing once the authorization was announced, and many of them got dates for first injection of Nov. 15th and 16th. These were the early birds who were willing and able to take the first available appointment, even if it meant having to take time off work. Some families have now been able to access earlier vaccines, in part by driving to Eau Claire. For many families, however, driving to Eau Claire or taking time off work are not easily done, and so it is not unlikely that their child's first dose will be a bit delayed as they juggle work schedules and car availability. Therefore, I think it reasonable to expect that many children will not be able to receive their first dose of vaccine before Friday Nov, 19th or, realistically, even later. Reaching full vaccination requires 2 doses three weeks apart plus two weeks after the second dose (total of 5 weeks from dose #1). A student who received their first injection on Nov. 19th would reach full immunity on Friday, Dec. 24th.

Therefore, I request that the board declares the winter break as the time to transition from mask-required to mask-optional for grades 4k-6. This would give a little bit of grace for those families who are unable to drop everything to get their child vaccinated immediately and is much more realistic and compassionate than assuming that everyone will be able to access vaccine within days of its approval (many pharmacies still don't offer it yet).

Mitigation measures continue to be important. Our regional hospitals are still full, and cases in Dunn County last week were the highest they've been since September. Both regionally and nationally, the recent decline in cases from the Delta surge has plateaued or started to climb again. We owe it to children's families to allow them to gain the extra protection of vaccination (if they so choose) before we remove the safeguard of required masks.

Thank you.

Alexandra Hall M.D.

Resident of Menomonie and parent of a high-schooler