



# ACORN MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

## CHILDREN FIRST, ALWAYS

August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Dear Acorn Students, Parents, and Guardians,

At the governing board meeting held on Wednesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the board unanimously voted to mandate the wearing of masks for all students, staff, and visitors inside school buildings regardless of vaccination status. This mandate will be in effect through September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, where it will be revisited based on the health and positive covid cases in our schools as well as our local community. **The face mask mandate will begin on Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.**

A court ruling passed on Monday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 determined that the Arizona ban on school face coverings is not currently in effect until September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021. As a result, school districts can determine requirements for safety mitigation strategies. With Yavapai County being in high transmission, mask use in schools is the number one recommended mitigation strategy.

While there are many different thoughts and opinions on mask use, the priority of Acorn has always been the health, safety, and education of our students, staff, and families. We are here to educate our students safely. What we are seeing in our surrounding community and all three of our school campuses threatens our ability to continue to provide in-person classes for our students without taking further steps to mitigate the spread of this rapidly spreading virus. We have seen a substantial increase of COVID-19 as well as other contagious illnesses. This, combined with strict health attendance policies, has resulted in the loss of in person instructional time for many students on quarantine protocols required by the Yavapai County Health Department, the Arizona Department of Health, and the CDC. While we are prepared for virtual learning for quarantined students, it is not what we prefer.

We know that providing instruction in person is critical for all of our students' academic, social, and emotional well-being. However, our ability to do so greatly depends on the spreading of this virus and our ability to mitigate it with the recommended strategies including mask use, cleaning and sanitation, physical distance in classrooms when able, ventilation, and immediate contact tracing after a positive case. In just 15 days of this new school year, we have seen more cases and quarantines than in all of last year **combined**. We cannot allow this trend to continue and believe following the public health officials' recommended mitigation strategy of mask use gives us the best chance to provide a high quality, in person learning experience that is the most beneficial for our students, their families, and our staff.

As we provide education, safety, meals, social interaction, emotional well-being, and so much more to our nearly 600 students, we are unable to provide these services without your help and support. At Acorn, children come first, always. Their health, your health, and our health is paramount. It is our hope that this temporary mask requirement will help lessen the spread within our school and the community that surrounds us while also lessening quarantines resulting in students being able to remain in class.

We appreciate the support you have given our teachers and staff and we look forward to a continued partnership as we move toward a healthier, safer, and successful school year. Please reach out should you have any questions or need further clarification.

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