

August 17, 2021

Dear Parents,

We are excited to welcome our families back for the 2021-2022 school year.

We have been planning for the in-person arrival of our students, and we are ready!

As you know, the safety and well-being of our students, staff and faculty is our number one priority. We strive to ensure the health and wellness of our entire school community. We will implement all safety measures within our control.

Considering the ongoing surge in COVID-19 cases, our school strongly recommends the use of facial coverings for all students on campus while indoors. Please have a conversation with your child with regards to their mask usage. Teachers and staff will not be responsible for enforcing your decision. Teachers and staff will, however, remind children that their parents' decision should be respected and abided by whichever it may be. We thank you in advance for your understanding.

Beyond helping protect all students, wearing masks will significantly limit who needs to quarantine when exposed, according to new CDC guidance. Our school will notify only those who are identified as a close contact in the event of exposure. The decision to wear a mask is supported by many expert resources, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and CDC.

On July 30, 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order 21-175. The EO does not allow our school to mandate student mask wearing. The order called for the Florida Department of Health and Florida Department of Education to work together to issue direction that protects parents' freedom to choose whether their children wear masks. Therefore, while our school is recommending students wear a mask, it is your right to send your child to school without one.

We want to remind you that students must remain home if:

- Student, or member of the household, is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
- Student, or member of the household, has been knowingly exposed to an individual who tested positive for COVID-19
- Student, or member of the household, is pending results of a COVID-19 test
- Any member of household is quarantined due to a COVID-19 exposure



GEYLER CASTRO
PRINCIPAL

SONIA ANDREU
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



Under no circumstances should a student come to our campus if any of the above cases applies. Please contact the school immediately if any of these cases apply so alternative arrangements can be made.

Published guidelines and recommendations are constantly evolving. Our school will stay up to date and modify our protocols as necessary. We will update our school community as changes are made. At this time, we are including the letter RE: Charter School Adherence to Emergency Rules sent to all Charter School Governing Boards, Administrators and Leaders on the evening of Friday, August 13, 2021 by Florida Department of Education's Dakeyan Graham, Executive Director of the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice.

It is our honor to care for your children. We look forward to working together with you to ensure the safety of our school community.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geyler Castro".

Geyler Castro
Principal



Andy Tuck, *Chair*
Marva Johnson, *Vice Chair*
Members
Monesia Brown
Ben Gibson
Tom Grady
Ryan Petty
Joe York

TO: Charter School Governing Boards, Administrators, and Leaders

FROM: Dakeyan C. Graham, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

DATE: August 13, 2021

SUBJECT: Charter School Compliance with Florida Department of Health Rule 64DER21-12

This letter serves as clarification that all public charters are to operate in compliance with Executive Order 21-175 and the Florida Department of Health's (FDOH) Emergency Order 64DER21-12, which ensures that masks for students in schools are optional, as established by a student's parent or guardian. The FDOH rule, issued on August 6, 2021, by Florida Surgeon General, Dr. Scott Rivkees, is explicit in its expectations for ensuring that any mandated mask policies imposed by a district or school "must allow for a parent or legal guardian of the student to opt-out the student from wearing a face covering or mask." It is important to note that the emergency rule does not require parents to submit medical documentation from a physician or a nurse practitioner in order to opt out and any such requirement is inconsistent with the emergency rule.

FDOH emergency rule 64DER21-12 is consistent with Executive Order 21-175, issued on July 30, 2021, which requires FDOH and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to immediately work together to execute rules pursuant to section 120.54, Florida Statutes (F.S.). In addition, section (s.) 1002.33(1), F.S. clearly states that "All charter schools in Florida are public schools and shall be part of the state's program of public education." Furthermore, subsections (9) and (16) of s. 1002.33, F.S. emphasize that charter schools are subject to all laws and rules (and, moreover, emergency rule) that relate to the health, safety and welfare of students.

Again, it is imperative that all charter schools ensure compliance with Executive Order 21-175 and the corresponding FDOH emergency rule 64DER21-12. Please know that our team is here to provide any additional clarification that you or your team may need as you ensure this compliance.

Sincerely,

Dakeyan C. Graham
Executive Director, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice

Dakeyan Graham, Ph.D., Executive Director
Office of Independent Education & Parental Choice