



April 21, 2021

Dear Orenda Public Charter School Staff and Families,

Thank you to all the staff and families who participated in the recent mask surveys. 83% of Orenda staff and 72% of families participated in the surveys. At the time of the survey, only 20% of Orenda staff were fully vaccinated (14 days have passed since receiving the last vaccine dose in the series). An additional 54% of Orenda staff were in the process of getting fully vaccinated.

The data gathered in the survey was presented at the board meeting last week along with the current COVID status at our locations and counties, and the CDC and local health department recommendations. The board decided not to make any modifications to the current TEA mask requirement for the rest of this school year. Through the end of July, we will continue to require masks for all individuals at our campuses. Below are the factors that were considered in this decision.

- Not all staff who want to be are fully vaccinated.
- Vaccines are only currently available for students age 16 and above.
- There is still moderate or high community spread for Bell and Williamson County.
- Current safety protocols are working to keep the COVID cases on campus to a minimum.
- CDC and local health departments are still recommending required masks in schools.

At this time, the intention is to have optional masks next school year unless the COVID situation or guidance changes. We are continuing frequent coordination with local health departments on updates to COVID protocols and current recommendations for schools. We appreciate your continued diligence in wearing face coverings for the rest of this school year to help prevent the spread of COVID and protect our staff and students.

As we look to the 2021-22 school year, the board also discussed remote learning as a continued option. Remote learning since March 2020 has been a crisis response to the COVID pandemic. While there are some students where remote learning is the right fit, the data shows that in-person learning is the better learning model for the majority of our students, especially for K - grade 5 students. In addition, this has been a difficult and challenging year for our teachers to provide high-quality simultaneous instruction to both in-person and remote students at the same time.

For these reasons, we will have in-person learning as the only option in 2021-22 for K – grade 5 at all of our campuses. Pending Texas legislature and TEA approval, there will be remote learning options in 2021 -22 for grades 6 – 12 students who



are successful with remote learning, as evidenced by attendance and student performance data.

Remote learning for grades 6-8 will only be offered through our Nolan Creek School through a blended learning model of weekly Edgenuity instructional lessons, implementation of AVID college-readiness strategies, peer collaboration activities, and project-based learning. Remote learning for grades 9 - 12 will only be offered through our Gateway Tech High School through self-paced Edgenuity courses following the current campus processes with virtual teacher support. The remote and in-person learning experiences and expectations at the two campuses and corresponding grades will be similar, with the difference being where the student is participating in learning and the method students use to interact with their peers and teacher(s). More specific information will be coming soon on remote learning including how to transfer your enrollment to a remote program at one of these campuses.

We appreciate your continued support and diligence with COVID protocols for a strong finish to the 2020-21 school year.

Stay safe and well,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Carla Silber'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Carla' and last name 'Silber' clearly distinguishable.

Carla Silber
Superintendent/COO
Orenda Public Charter School District