

**Trail clarifies virtual usage**

BY KEVIN MCCONLOGUE PRESS EXAMINER October 20, 2021

The Lackawanna Trail School District clarified the policy on students’ use of virtual school days.

At a virtual school board meeting on Tuesday night (Oct. 12), Superintendent Matthew Rakauskas said so far the districts’ synchronous virtual option for students who prefer not to learn in-person due to the pandemic has been going well. With this option, in-person learners are allowed to use three virtual days per semester that will not count as absences. Students must have their cameras on and be participating in class to be counted as present.

Both Rakauskas and principal of student management Shannon Kuchak said they have been receiving emails from parents about what happens if a student were to get sick after they have used the three virtual days.

“Even if they have used up their virtual days, we still encourage them to log-in to their classes so they don’t fall behind, “ Kuchak said. “The days will be counted absences however, to avoid the possibility of students pivoting to virtual when they feel like don’t coming to school.”

Kuchak said students’ will need a doctor’s note to excuse the absence just like a normal school absence. Rakauskas said he is pleased with the results of the synchronous virtual option so far, as it has helped students who needed to quarantine due to contact tracing keep up in school.

“I’m glad we decided to keep this option,” Rakauskas said. “I have heard from people in other school districts who don’t have this option that kids are falling behind should they have to quarantine. We were prepared for situations like this, and I think it says a lot about us as a district.”

District solicitor John Audi reaffirmed to the public that after further research and council, Trail will continue to comply with the Department of Health mask mandate for K-12 schools. Audi said that unless the order is struck down in a court of law, it is a legal mandate that must be followed.

“Masking in schools is a very polarizing issue,” Audi said. “That doesn’t change the fact that this district could lose a ton of liability should we not follow the order and something happens. That could be financially devastating for Lackawanna Trail.”

Audi also reassured that legality of the mask mandate is making its way through the courts. If a court rules the mask mandate is illegal, Trail will be able to move back to its original health and safety plan in which masks were optional.

In other happenings across the district, Elementary principal Brian Kearney announced the school’s Halloween parade will take place Friday, Oct. 29 at 10 a.m. Business manager Keith Glynn also said the district is greatly in need of school bus drivers. Anyone interested in applying should reach out to the district business office at 570-945-5184.

In other business, the board approved:

>a contract with Murphy Dougherty & Co. to conduct the June 30, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 financial statement audits.

>the appointments of: Tara Conway, full-time learning support teacher; Kathleen Loughney, full-time hybrid elementary faculty teacher; Heather Stage, full-time central administrative assistant to the superintendent and transportation director; Jacqueline Thomas, bus driver for 2021-22; and Kelly Hopkins, marching band volunteer for 2021-22.

>the resignation of: Victoria Brown, learning support teacher, retroactively effective Oct. 1.

>the sale of a wooden desk to Kelly Hopkins at a bid of $26.

The Lackawanna Trail School Board will next meet for a work session on Monday, Nov. 1, at 7:30 p.m. The Zoom link will be posted at www.ltsd.org.



SHANNON KUCHAK