To the Staff and Families of Westwood Heights School District,

As a district we are overcoming the strain of this pandemic which has caused so much suffering for our students and families. We would like to thank you for your consistency and support in keeping our children safe. It is because of your efforts and diligence that our numbers, when it comes to COVID-19 positive cases in our buildings, have been much lower compared to most districts in the county. From the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year to date, our district has only had a total of 175 positive cases, which is under 8% of our staff and students. Our positive cases have been nearly eliminated, as evidenced by the data below:

**As of 2/24/2022**

**Hamady High School Covid free for 24 days**

**Hamady Middle School Covid free for 34 days**

**Hamady Elementary School Covid free 49 days**

**Academy West Covid Free for 98 days**

**McMonagle Elementary School Covid Free 36 days**

As you are aware, there have been some new changes with mask mandates in school buildings. As of 2/22/22, the Genesee County Health Department has lifted the mask mandate completely for schools. They have left the decision up to the school districts themselves on whether they will still require masking of students and staff. Studies have been published describing the difficulties that masking is causing, especially in the speech and language abilities of our youngest students.

We will be cautiously moving to a mask optional policy, allowing parents to decide if their student will continue to wear a mask in school. We respect the rights of our parents to determine what the healthiest strategy is for their children, and we will support them in whatever decision they make. In the event that a new, concerning variant is discovered, or cases trend upward, the Westwood Heights Board of Education will revisit this policy to best protect our community. The following timetable will be followed in this change of policy:

**March 7-Mask optional at Hamady Elementary**

**March 16-Mask optional at McMonagle Elementary**

**March 23 –Mask optional at Academy West**

**April 6-Mask Optional at Hamady Middle/High School**

We thank you for your patience throughout this process and want to assure you that we are doing everything in our power to keep our staff and children safe. Should conditions change, or positive cases re-emerge, we will reconsider our policy. The following steps will remain in place:

* Students are still required to wear a mask while riding on the school bus
* We will continue with increased levels of sanitizing in our facilities
* If staff or your child is sick,please stay home or keep your child home. Always be mindful of others’ safety.
* Testing is still available for staff and students within our buildings
* If you feel the need to test, we strongly urge you to test as soon as you get to school
* If you do not feel well on day six of testing positive with continued symptoms stay home for the remaining five days, then return to school
* We continue to offer virtual learning options for students who cannot attend in-person school

**If you have any questions, or want to provide feedback regarding this policy, please contact your school health assistant or your building principal.**

Sincerely,

Moneake Bransford, District Health Assistant Hamady Middle High School

Quay Wright, Health Assistant Hamady Middle High School

Sandy Roe, Secretary Health Assistant Hamady Elementary

Latasha Rice, Health Assistant McMonagle Elementary

Tasha Bennett, Health Assistant Academy West

Michael Davis, CDC School Liaison supporting Genesee County