



*Serving With Pride The*  
**Township of Manalapan**  
*and the*  
**Borough of Englishtown**

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**John J. Marciante, Jr., Ph.D.**

*Superintendent of Schools*

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

I have received many emails regarding what occurred at last night's Board meeting. Many people are making assumptions that are not accurate and I want to take this opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings. First, it is important to recognize that the Board of Education, while they agreed to send a letter to the governor advocating for parental choice in September 2021, fully supported my decision to maintain the mask mandate in a manner consistent with Executive Order 175, which is still in effect.

When parents were given the opportunity to comment on the Safe Reopening Plan and the Mask Mandate it became very clear that the level and frustration and anger in the room was at a level I have not seen in the fourteen years that I have been superintendent. Parents directed it to the board for not taking the opportunity to pass a resolution to implement the mask mandate and directed it at me for my decision to continue to follow Executive Order 175 as well as follow the recommendations of the CDC.

There was a point in the meeting though when it was clear something radical had to occur. A parent asked me directly what I am going to do when she sends her daughter into school without a mask. I did not answer immediately. She repeated as she increasingly raised the volume of her voice as she asked the question. Her preschool aged daughter moved into a fetal position at her feet crying as she continued to repeat the question. All of a sudden someone shouted out something about "it is all over Facebook and we are all sending our children into school tomorrow without masks." I immediately turned to the president and the vice president of the board and indicated that we needed to go into a closed session to discuss a personnel matter.

While I am not supposed to share what occurred in a closed session I believe that it is important for the community to know what I said to eliminate any confusion about what happened. I strongly recommended to the board that I be put on Administrative leave even though they have already voted against doing that. I then stated that it was clear that parents in the community were planning on sending their children into school without masks. Unfortunately children were being put into the middle of this conflict. While the easy solution was just to bend to their demand, that goes against everything that has driven my career in education. The only solution that would protect children from being used as pawns was for the board to put me on administrative leave, which would then give them the authority to implement the parental choice resolution.

I recognize there are parents in the community who believe that this decision puts their child at risk. The Board and I were faced with a difficult choice. The Board and I could take a stand that maintained the mask mandate. This would force children to deal with being directed by their parents to act one way while the school rules they have followed all year were directly opposite to their parents direction. For a child this is an extremely difficult emotional conflict they are being asked to resolve. The second choice would be placing me on administrative leave and passing a

resolution to allow parent choice which would increase the risk of COVID in the schools. The fact that we had only one confirmed positive case among students, the lowest number since September, indicated that the lesser evil of these two choices was placing me on administrative leave and the board passing the resolution.

I was in complete agreement with this decision and believe it was the right thing to do. To all those who are concerned that it is a horrible way to end my career, let me assure you I do not feel that way. It is consistent with what I have always tried to do, to make sure that what is best for kids is always the basis for every decision. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to lead the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional Schools for the past 14 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John J. Marciante, Jr., Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

John J. Marciante, Jr., Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools