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August 20, 2021

There is interest in several issues regarding COVID-19 and TCA+A schools.

We are monitoring data reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concerning SARS CoV-2. We will continue to monitor the data, and meet with legal counsel, as needed, to assess the situation so that we can make informed decisions for our TCA+A family. We appreciate the interest and patience of our community as well as your input. All should be aware that it is unlikely that everyone will agree with all decisions made on all COVID-19 issues. However, mutual respect for differing views and conclusions is important in moving forward together toward a successful school year.

We address some of these issues and provide some information we intend to be helpful:

**Masks/Face Coverings**

[Governor Abbott's Executive Order](#), GA 38 states that no school district may require any person to wear a face covering or to mandate that another person wear a face covering; that imposition of any such face-covering requirement by a local governmental entity or official constitutes a "failure to comply with" the executive order that is subject to a fine up to \$1,000.00; and even though face coverings cannot be mandated, that does not prevent individuals from wearing one if they choose. The current TCA+A policy is that each parent, member of administration, faculty, staff and visitor decides whether or not to wear a mask/face covering on TCA+A campuses.

**Decisions By Other Schools**

The Texas Supreme Court has stayed all lower Court orders supporting decisions by some other schools to mandate masks/face coverings, leaving the Governor's prohibition against mask mandates in place as the current over-arching law. TCA+A is a nonprofit corporation that holds the charter for Texas School of the Arts and Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts. We are not a part of any other school system, including the Fort Worth ISD. If TCA+A were to violate the law, we open ourselves up to penalties and perhaps the closing of the schools. Additionally, some districts that initially announced they were requiring masks are no longer requiring them after recent court rulings on the Executive Order GA 38.

**Virtual Learning**

The Texas legislature did not approve funding for virtual learning in their latest session. If school districts are providing virtual learning, they are likely using what are called ESSER funds. Larger districts received millions of dollars of that funding. However, smaller charter systems, like TCA+A, did not receive enough ESSER funding to pay for a virtual learning option. The Texas Education Agency did approve "remote conferencing," which allows 20 days of synchronous

virtual instruction for the school year if a student meets certain requirements, such as a positive Covid test. TEA approved on 8/19/2021 that districts may now submit a waiver for any student that meets very specific guidelines may be eligible to exceed the 20 days of remote conferencing (students with a documented medical condition and/or students with multiple positive COVID tests and close contact with positive cases).

**How can I express my opinions and thoughts on this subject?**

You may email CEO Paul Gravley at [paul.gravley@artsacademics.org](mailto:paul.gravley@artsacademics.org). You may email the board chair directly at [governance@artsacademics.org](mailto:governance@artsacademics.org). All emails are being reviewed, considered and collected. All are welcome to provide feedback at TCA+A Board meetings. The agenda for each meeting is posted to our website at least 72 hours before each meeting. A link is provided to sign up for public comments. Every public comment speaker is limited to three minutes for comment.