

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

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Ms. Alisha DiCorpo
Superintendent of Schools

February 16, 2022

Dear New Milford Public Schools Community:

This letter is to inform you that at their meeting on February 15, 2022, the New Milford Board of Education discussed and voted on the future of masking in New Milford Public Schools. After much deliberation, the Board voted to repeal Board Policy 1900.4900.5900.6900 – “Wearing Masks and Face Coverings During the COVID-19 Pandemic” effective March 1, 2022, and as of March 1, 2022 masks shall not be required to be worn by individuals on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities unless otherwise required by law.

As of the date of this letter, this means:

- Masks are optional for all beginning March 1, 2022, with the exception of on school buses/transportation;
- The Board of Education also discussed and voted that staff vaccination and/or required weekly testing is no longer mandatory as of February 16, 2022;
- The Board of Education also discussed and voted on Volunteer policy 1212 which reverts to November 6, 2018 language that does not require vaccination and/or testing for volunteers, effective February 16, 2022.

During the first few days/weeks when the lifting of the mask mandate takes effect in NMPS, the administration, faculty, and staff will be assisting students if/as needed as they navigate the transition in order to provide for choice in a respectful environment where students feel safe. In addition, the schools will be leaving partitions in place in classrooms where small group instruction is taking place, as well as in the cafeterias, until updated guidance is released from the State. In the absence of guidance, we will remove all partitions over the April vacation period so upon return to school, the desks and cafeteria will look very similar to what they looked like prior to the pandemic. Removing the partitions over the April vacation ensures we have sufficient time and resources to accomplish the removal.

We plan to maintain several of the following mitigation measures while we assess the impact of the transition to a mask optional environment: continue to promote self-monitoring of symptoms and isolation/testing at the onset of COVID symptoms, continue to promote handwashing and covering of the mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing, continue to provide masks to those staff members or students who request them and to provide at-home tests as needed while our supplies last.

Over the next few weeks, we anticipate that we will receive information from the State Department of Education regarding how we are to move forward with the series of addendums that are tied to the masking portion of the Executive Order, as well as what the expectation will be from the Federal Transportation Authority regarding mask-wearing on school buses. ***It is important to***

note that as of today masks continue to be required by federal law on school bus transportation until further notice. If there are any changes to that law, I will follow up with an updated communication.

As we have successfully done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to monitor our daily positive case rates, communicate often with our local Health Director and Medical Advisor, our staff, and our neighboring towns to adjust to any changes in our school conditions should the need arise.

Other important information to keep in mind:

- Students and staff who experience any symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home and may access a school-provided test if needed.
- Mask wearing in schools is optional for students in grades PK-12 and staff. School staff will be unable to monitor/enforce student choice. We ask that families discuss this with their children at home.
- We ask that the entire NMPS community be mindful and respectful of individual choice. We will work together to ensure that everyone in our schools feels comfortable and safe.
- Our schools have N-95 masks available for adults, and test kits available for students and staff. We encourage those who are traveling to request a test kit from their school nurse, and test prior to returning to school.
- Faculty and students should continue to report positive test results to their school nurse and/or administration.
- If your child is fully vaccinated for COVID-19, please contact the school nurses to let them know.

Sincerely,
Alisha DiCorpo
Superintendent