



Little Falls Township Public Schools



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February 10, 2022

Hello Hornet Families,

I would like to begin this letter by thanking you all for your patience and support as we navigate the pandemic. Earlier this week, Governor Murphy announced that he would be lifting the mask mandate on Monday, March 7, 2022. This certainly indicates a light at the end of a long tunnel. I wanted to take this moment to give you an update regarding this decision. While at first glance it may seem that this is a simple and easy change, there are many layers that the District needs to take into account and secure before we move forward.

This lift is on State mandates only, not Federal mandates, so we would still need to comply with them. Additionally, for every student anxious about wearing a mask, there is a student anxious about taking it off. We have three grade levels (Preschool, Kindergarten, and 1st) who never entered school without a mask on and we want to make sure we have the proper supports in place for them. Lastly, and most importantly, we have not received the NJDOH guidelines that are set to accompany this mandate.

Based on the information above, the data we have collected, and the multiple meetings that have been conducted over the last few days **I can assure you that parents will have a choice regarding their children masking. The extent to which we offer choice will be determined by the NJDOH guidance.** It is my sincere hope that I can write to you in the next few weeks to inform you that in all instances in the school building your children will mask and unmask at your discretion. Until then, here is what I am certain of:

1. Beginning March 7, 2022 masks will be optional while students are seated in their classrooms.
2. Masks will be optional when students are outside for recess.
3. Masks must be worn on buses.
4. Additional protocols such as masking upon entering the building, masking while walking through hallways, and plexiglass in the lunchrooms will be assessed and addressed once we receive the anticipated guidance.
5. Counseling and mental health staff will be trained and available for any students struggling with masking/unmasking situations.
6. The District will strictly enforce HIB policies and procedures when it comes to anyone being bullied as a result of wearing or not wearing a mask.
7. **It is extremely important to note that these protocols may change when we receive the new guidance from the NJDOH or NJDOE.**

I appreciate and understand how stressful and trying these times have been. As long as we continue to work ALL TOGETHER we will remain successful in our navigation of this pandemic.

Be well,

Tracey Marinelli
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