STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

May 20, 2021

Universal Mask Policies in School Buildings

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), in consultation with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), issued binding guidance, **Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together** (AAA document) **requiring all students and staff** to wear a face mask when inside a school building, with limited exceptions.

This communication is to confirm that schools must continue to implement those **universal masking policies in school buildings**. As you probably know, on Thursday, May 13, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) made the announcement that fully vaccinated individuals may stop wearing face coverings in certain settings. However, the CDC confirmed shortly thereafter that **it recommends schools continue to use the current COVID-19 prevention strategies for the 2020-2021 school year**. Connecticut's protocols have been updated as well, via Governor Lamont's executive orders, which confirm that the binding guidance issued by the CSDE in the AAA Document is mandatory.

Specific to outdoor settings, masks are not required, but we recommend continuing mask wearing for students and staff in situations where students and/or staff are outdoors and in close contact while stationary (e.g., sitting/standing together in a group). Where students are actively moving around during recess or physical education activities, masks can be removed. Masks should also be on when going out of the building to recess and back into the building afterward. Good hand hygiene should be emphasized before and after outdoor activities.

We are proud of the meaningful progress Connecticut has made towards reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have all been consistent in applying our suite of mitigating strategies in the school settings, and agreed to Finish Strong, acknowledging that schools are unique settings, and safe and equitable access is a top priority. Right now, many students are not yet eligible for vaccination, middle schools may have partial populations that are eligible while others are not, and some eligible individuals may not have been vaccinated and passed the required time since their shot to be fully vaccinated. **Therefore, the current rule requiring universal mask wearing for all individuals in all school buildings will remain in place at this time.**

We will continue to monitor updated guidance from the CDC to inform planning for the summer and next year.