

June 6, 2021

Dear Haldane Community,

As I wrote to you on Friday, I am aware of the continued media coverage regarding potential changes to state guidance on wearing masks in schools. Over the course of the weekend several families have written to me about their feelings on this topic. I am providing an additional update given my sense that this has continued to receive a lot of attention among community members over the past two days.

I would like to reiterate that no updated guidance has been issued to schools as of this afternoon. What is being circulated is a letter from Howard Zucker to the CDC. This communication is relevant but it is not how the New York State Department of Health provides guidance to schools. I have confirmed through our local Superintendent's council, who have been in contact with state legislators and the Governor's Office, that no updates have been made to the state guidance as of today. Mask requirements in schools may change based on the CDC's response to Dr. Zucker's letter. All individuals on our campus are still required to be masked at this time.

If and when updated guidance is issued I review it with key stakeholders, including our district physician and local department of health. We have followed this process since the start of the pandemic and it has served us well. It helps me remain attuned to the perspectives of our employees and families, who are both impacted by such changes while hearing from health officials who are more closely connected to our school community.

Before Friday, my sense was that our faculty, staff, and families were looking forward to the end of the school year and various upcoming culminating events to celebrate our students' work this year, including moving up ceremonies, prom, and graduation. I ask that we keep the good work of our faculty, staff, students, and families as our focus and trust the process that has been utilized to create so many opportunities for our students in this very unique year.

Sincerely,
Phil Benante, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Estimada comunidad de Haldane,

Como les escribí el viernes, estoy al tanto de la cobertura continua de los medios con respecto a los posibles cambios en las pautas estatales sobre el uso de máscaras en las escuelas. A lo largo del fin de semana, varias familias me han escrito sobre sus sentimientos sobre este tema. Estoy proporcionando una actualización adicional dada mi sensación de que esto ha seguido recibiendo mucha atención entre los miembros de la comunidad durante los últimos dos días.

Me gustaría reiterar que no se ha emitido una guía actualizada a las escuelas a partir de esta tarde. Lo que circula es una carta de Howard Zucker a los CDC. Esta comunicación es relevante, pero no es la forma en que el Departamento de Salud del Estado de Nueva York brinda orientación a las escuelas. He confirmado a través del consejo de nuestro superintendente local, que ha estado en contacto con los legisladores estatales y la Oficina del Gobernador, que no se han actualizado las directrices estatales hasta el día de hoy. Los requisitos de máscaras en las escuelas pueden cambiar según la respuesta de los CDC a la carta del Dr. Zucker. Todas las personas en nuestro campus todavía deben estar enmascaradas en este momento.

Si y cuando se emite una guía actualizada, la reviso con las partes interesadas clave, incluido nuestro médico del distrito y el departamento de salud local. Hemos seguido este proceso desde el comienzo de la pandemia y nos ha sido de gran utilidad. Me ayuda a estar en sintonía con las perspectivas de nuestros empleados y familias, quienes se ven afectados por tales cambios mientras escucho a los funcionarios de salud que están más estrechamente conectados con nuestra comunidad escolar.

Antes del viernes, tenía la sensación de que nuestra facultad, personal y familias esperaban con ansias el final del año escolar y los próximos eventos culminantes para celebrar el trabajo de nuestros estudiantes este año, incluidas las ceremonias de avance, el baile de graduación y la graduación. Les pido que mantengamos el buen trabajo de nuestra facultad, personal, estudiantes y familias como nuestro enfoque y confiemos en el proceso que se ha utilizado para crear tantas oportunidades para nuestros estudiantes en este año único.

Atentamente,
Phil Benante, Ed. D.
Superintendente de escuelas



Department of Health

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

LISA J. PINO, M.A., J.D.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

June 4, 2021

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Walensky:

As we continue to work to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and balance reopening with safety, New York State strives for consistency across and between settings with similar risk levels and populations.

The current [CDC guidance for K-12 schools](#) recommends a requirement for “consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks with proper filtration by all students, teachers, and staff”. There is no distinction between mask wearing for indoor versus outdoor activities (except for a vague reference to sports) and it does not address vaccinated individuals.

On the other hand, current [CDC guidance for youth camps](#) “strongly encourages mask use indoors for people who are not fully vaccinated” while stating that outdoors, “people do not need to wear masks [irrespective of vaccination status]” although people who are not fully vaccinated are “encouraged” to wear a mask in certain higher-risk circumstances. In addition, it says “people who are fully vaccinated do not need to wear masks” both indoors and outdoors.

As many camps take place on school grounds, both serve school-age children, and the end of the school year/start of the camp season both occur in June, New York State plans to align our school and camp mask guidance as follows. In both settings, as a minimum state-wide guidance:

- Indoors, mask use will be strongly encouraged but not required for students, campers, and staff/teachers/counselors who are not fully vaccinated.
- Outdoors, masks are not required; students, campers, and staff/teachers/counselors who are not fully vaccinated are “encouraged” to wear a mask in certain higher-risk circumstances.
- Both indoors and outdoors, students, campers, and staff who are fully vaccinated do not need to wear masks.
- Schools and camps may choose to implement stricter standards.

If there is any data or science that you are aware of that contradicts moving forward with this approach, please let me know as soon as possible. We plan to make this guidance effective on Monday June 7.

Sincerely,

Howard A. Zucker, MD, JD
New York State Commissioner of Health