



Dr. Nicholas J. Spera, Executive Director

Denise M. Dunning, Principal & Director of Special Education

Tanya N. Collins, Associate Principal & Director of Human Resources

William Linski, Director of Instruction, Programming & Athletics

February 9, 2022

Dear ISAAC Family,

As most of you are aware, a few days ago Governor Lamont announced that he is endorsing a plan developed in consultation with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) Commissioner Dr. Manisha Juthani and Connecticut State Department of Education Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker to eliminate the statewide requirement that masks be worn in schools. This plan is contingent upon the Connecticut General Assembly voting to extend the Governor's existing Executive Order giving the public health Commissioner the ability to implement mask requirements in certain settings. The Governor's plan is set to take effect on Monday, February 28, 2022, and would allow local school districts to determine if a mask mandate should remain in place.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you about the upcoming mask requirement plan that will take place at ISAAC based on the aforementioned plan proposed by Governor Lamont and other state leaders. In consultation with our district medical advisor, Dr. Vijay Sikand, and Ledge Light Health District (LLHD) Director, Stephen Mansfield, ISAAC is delaying the proposed date for the removal of masks in an attempt to allow our families the ample time needed to fully vaccinate their student(s), if desired. Knowing that the optional use of masks removes one layer of mitigation, our team wants to offer the opportunity for our families to gain another layer of mitigation by providing time for two doses of the COVID-19 vaccination before moving to an optional mask environment for all students and staff at ISAAC.

To support this plan, ISAAC in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and Griffin Hospital, we will be hosting two vaccination clinics in our gymnasium for all ISAAC families, friends, and members of the community ages 5 and above:

- Monday, February 21, 2022 from 9 am to 12:30 pm (All types of vaccines and doses including boosters)
- Wednesday, March 16, 2022 from 4 pm to 7 pm (All types of vaccines and doses including boosters)

Following the timeline associated with this opportunity and based on feedback from our medical advisor, **we have set the date for an optional mask environment for all students and staff for Thursday, March 17, 2022.** The key word in this announcement is "OPTIONAL", as any student or staff member will be allowed to wear a mask for the remainder of the school year, if desired. In addition, the decision to wear a mask will remain a private family decision as our administrators and teachers will not be monitoring the use of masks unless mandated according to DPH guidance based on certain scenarios yet to be provided to schools. Moreover, the optional use of masks will not be related to vaccination status unless mandated through legislative requirements. In addition, regardless of vaccination status, the mandatory use of masks in the building will remain effect through Wednesday, March 16, 2022.

Although one layer of mitigation is becoming optional, we will continue with several of the mitigation layers that have been established for the past two years including but limited to: provide social distancing measures to the greatest extent possible in our classrooms, limited visitor access during the school day, scheduled cleanings throughout the building including touch points and bathrooms, and continued filtering of clean air through our HVAC systems throughout the building. Moreover, ISAAC will be hosting COVID-19 vaccination clinics for all ages that will include all of the vaccine manufacturers (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson) for 1st, 2nd, and booster doses on the following dates throughout the school year:

- February 21st, 9 am to 12:30pm;
- March 16th, 4 pm to 7 pm
- April 6th, 4 pm to 7 pm
- April 27th, 4 pm to 7 pm
- May 18th, 4 pm to 7 pm
- June 8th, 4 pm to 7 pm

It is important to note that although we are informing our families now in an effort to support those who wish to have their student(s) vaccinated before the optional mask plan, there are several caveats that could delay this decision or allow for a reinforcement of mandatory mask wearing for all students and staff at ISAAC:

- Rates in the area require masks according to Ledge Light Health District officials
- Another variant emerges in the region that becomes a threat to our students and staff according to DPH officials
- Ledge Light Health District Director and/or our District Medical Advisor recommends mandatory mask wearing
- SDE, DPH, and/or the Governor issues a mask mandate
- Other regulations emerge from possible legislation

One thing that does not change is the shared responsibility with all stakeholders regarding the spread of illness when symptoms exist. **It is imperative that if any student or staff member is not feeling well and are exhibiting any symptoms, that they remain at home for the day.** Remaining at home when exhibiting any symptoms is one of the best mitigation strategies that can be done. Once again, if a student or staff member is exhibiting any of the following symptoms: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; we ask that they please STAY HOME and GET TESTED. Those in need of a COVID-19 test can receive one from the school upon request. We also ask that anyone who has tested positive, been identified as a close contact, and/or are exhibiting symptoms, to please contact our school nurse, Carrie Gregory via phone or email at cgregory@isaacschool.org and/or our Principal and COVID Liaison, Denise Dunning via phone or email at, ddunning@isaacschool.org. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

In the upcoming weeks ahead, we will be providing more information to our families as we receive additional guidance from the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). Yesterday, schools received an email stating that SDE will be working in close collaboration with DPH to provide updated guidance regarding mask wearing, quarantine and isolation, social distancing, ventilation, and other appropriate mitigation strategies. I anticipate that we will receive guidance in the following weeks ahead. In addition, Ledge Light Health District issued a statement yesterday to all school leaders with recommendations that supports our plan moving forward.

As with any decision, we understand there will be mixed opinions and emotions that come with this plan which was initiated by Governor Lamont and the Commissioners of the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health. This optional mask policy is a change in schools that has not been experienced since March 12, 2020. Again, the reasoning for the delay to implement the announced proposed plan by the Governor is to allow for a transparent amount of time for our families to decide whether to get their student(s) vaccinated and to ensure that our school has all of the necessary guidance and information from state officials and local leaders.

With this said, I am confident that moving forward, this change will allow for our students and staff to enhance the engagement of our students, academically and social-emotionally, in a safe and nurturing teaching and learning environment. We understand that this is a lot of information to receive in one letter, however, we feel it is important that we remain transparent with our school community. In addition, we want to echo the push by the CDC, DPH, and LLHD to remain vaccinated through initial vaccinations and boosters as they become available. We hope several of our families, friends, and other members of the community take advantage of these clinics offered after-school hours at ISAAC.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,



Dr. Nicholas J. Spera
Executive Director