



*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 25, 2022

Dear ISAAC Family,

The purpose of this letter is to notify you about a change in the upcoming mask requirement plan that will take place at ISAAC. **Effective on Monday, February 28, 2022, masks will be optional for all staff and students at ISAAC.** The reason to initiate a change in the date for the optional removal of masks came from new guidance that was released today at 3:45 pm from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Within the past few hours following the new guidance and recommendations from the CDC, several meetings, phone call discussions, and valuable feedback was obtained from our district medical advisor, Dr. Vijay Sikand, Ledge Light Health District (LLHD) Director, Stephen Mansfield, our District Safe School Committee, and the chair and vice-chair of the ISAAC Board of Directors. Collectively, we believe that a change in the optional mask wearing date was warranted based on the new guidance and recommendations from the CDC, the recommendations from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), the percentage of vaccinated staff and students at ISAAC, and the new CDC COVID-19 community metric levels in New London.

As most of you are aware, a few weeks ago Governor Lamont announced that he is endorsing a plan developed in consultation with DPH Commissioner Dr. Manisha Juthani and CSDE Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker to eliminate the statewide requirement that masks be worn in schools. The Governor's plan that is set to take effect beginning on Monday, February 28, 2022, allows local school districts like ISAAC, to determine if a mask mandate should remain in place. In addition to the aforementioned recommendation from DPH and CSDE, the CDC changed their stance on mandatory and recommended mask wearing today based on new metrics regarding community levels. This change that was announced this evening can be viewed on their website using the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>.

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 or enforcing the use of masks unless masks become mandated according to guidance based on certain metrics and/or conditions in the community or with individual cases. Regardless of a family's decision regarding the use of a mask at ISAAC, all decisions will be fully respected by school administration and staff. In addition, **the use of masks will remain mandated in the nurse's office and when actively singing indoors in the music room only.** ISAAC will continue to notify families when there is a positive case of an individual associated with ISAAC, however, the practice of contact tracing will discontinue with the start of the new mask policy.

Our district medical advisor, LLHD, and DPH continues to encourage the vaccination of all eligible people within the school community and beyond. To support this plan, ISAAC in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and Griffin Hospital, will continue to host vaccination clinics in our gymnasium for all ISAAC families, friends, and members of the community ages 5 and above. Our next vaccination clinic is being held on Wednesday, March 16, 2022 from 4 pm to 7 pm. All types of vaccines and doses including boosters are available. This includes all of the vaccine manufacturers (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson) for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and booster doses on the following dates throughout the school year:

- March 16<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm to 7 pm
- April 6<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm to 7 pm
- April 27<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm to 7 pm
- May 18<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm to 7 pm
- June 8<sup>th</sup>, 4 pm to 7 pm

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: promotion of hand washing and hand sanitizing, providing social distancing measures to the greatest extent possible in our classrooms, limiting visitor access during the school day, scheduling cleanings throughout the building including touch points and bathrooms, using bell covers on instruments in band classes, and continuing the practice of maximizing the filtration of clean air through our HVAC systems throughout the building.

It is important to note that although we are changing the optional mask plan to Monday, February 28, 2022, there are several caveats that would be collectively considered and factored into a decision that would allow for a reinforcement of mandatory mask wearing for all students and staff at ISAAC:

- Rates in the area require masks according to the new CDC COVID-19 community metrics
- 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](mailto:cgregory@isaacschool.org) and/or our Principal and COVID Liaison, Denise Dunning via phone or email at [ddunning@isaacschool.org](mailto:ddunning@isaacschool.org). We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

As a reminder, the **use of masks on busses remains a local decision based on the sending school district.** Tonight, the CDC officially removed the federal mandate that required students to wear masks when traveling on school busses. The decision regarding this change in federal policy can be viewed on the CDC website using the link provide below: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html>. We encourage all ISAAC families to check with their local district transportation provider for details.

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 change in this decision comes after the most recent announcement from the CDC along with discussions and guidance from our medical advisor, LLHD Director, our Board of Directors Chair and Vice Chair, and our ISAAC Safe School Committee.

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 and make the necessary changes when new information is available and communicated. 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