

Frequently Asked Questions
Mask Optional School Environment and Other Mitigation Strategies

March 1, 2022

Q1: When will masks be optional inside school buildings?

Governor Hochul announced that the Statewide indoor mask mandate affecting schools will end on Wednesday, March 2, 2022. In accordance with the resolution passed by the Board of Education earlier this month, mask wearing will be optional in our school buildings for students, faculty and staff effective Wednesday, March 2.

Q2: Are masks optional for all District employees including teachers, staff members, and administrators?

Yes. Effective, March 2, 2022, masks are optional for each individual in a school building including teachers, staff members, and administrators. Like students and families, teachers, staff members, and administrators will make a personal decision to wear masks or not wear masks. The District will support each individual's decision.

Q3: Are masks optional for visitors in a school building?

Yes. Effective, March 2, 2022, masks are optional for each individual in a school building including visitors.

Q4: Are masks optional for all activities including athletics and performing arts?

Yes. Effective, March 2, 2022, masks are optional for all activities including athletics and performing arts.

Q5: Will parents be informed of the decision of their child's teacher to wear a mask or not wear a mask?

No. The wearing of a mask is a personal decision for each individual.

Q6: Can a parent request that their child's teacher or a particular staff member wear a mask or not wear a mask?

No. The decision to wear a mask or not to wear a mask is a personal decision for each individual.

Q7: Can a staff member request that a student wear a mask or not wear a mask?

No. In the same way that a parent cannot request that a teacher or staff member wear a mask, a teacher or staff member cannot request that a student wear a mask.

Q8: Are masks required on transportation?

As of this writing, we have not received official guidance regarding masking on public transportation including school busses. Therefore, masks are optional on District transportation until and unless we hear otherwise. We will update the community as necessary.

Q9: Can the school enforce my wish to have my child wear a mask/not wear a mask?

No. We encourage families to discuss with their children their expectations regarding mask wearing. Your child's teachers are not responsible for monitoring your child's mask wearing/not mask wearing.

Q10: Can I request to have my child sit next to a masked/unmasked child?

No. We cannot accommodate requests to sit or group students by mask status.

Q11: Can I request that my child only work with masked/unmasked children?

No. We cannot accommodate requests for children to work with masked/unmasked children.

Q12: Will students have a virtual option if they do not feel comfortable in a mask optional environment?

No. The District does not have a virtual option that parents can select.

Q13: My child wants to continue to wear a mask, but is nervous. How can the school help?

Our schools are prepared to support children in whatever their family chooses to do. We recommend explaining to your child that either choice is ok. The choice of wearing a mask or not is up to each family's preference based on their individual circumstances. Please feel free to reach out to any member of the building's wellness team, teacher, or building administrator if you think your child will require additional support.

Q14: What is the protocol if a student is bullying another student for either wearing or not wearing a mask?

Any instances of bullying will be taken seriously and should be reported to a trusted adult immediately. The District has protocols outlined in the District's Code of Conduct, which states "The District expects all students to conduct themselves in an appropriate and civil manner, with proper regard and respect for the rights and welfare of other students, District personnel and other members of the school community, and for the care of school facilities and equipment with the goal of making school a community free of violence, intimidation, bullying, harassment and discrimination." Parents should contact their child's teacher and/or building administrator if other students are making their child feel uncomfortable about whether he/she wears a mask.

Q15: Will students continue to sit three (3) feet apart in classrooms?

At the start of the school year, classrooms were set up with student desks generally spaced three (3) feet apart wherever possible. There are no plans to change classroom set ups at this time.

Q16: Are teachers permitted to have children work in groups, less than three (3) feet apart?

Yes. Teachers have used cooperative learning strategies all year and may continue to do so in a mask optional environment.

Q17: Will physical distancing be reduced during lunch time?

Yes. We will be implementing a return to pre-pandemic lunch operations, in which students will no longer sit six feet apart, in two steps. A few individual desks have been retained for those students who are more comfortable sitting physically distanced at six feet apart. Cafeteria tables have been restored in each school. We will monitor the effect of this configuration for two weeks to see if there is an impact on the number of positive cases. If we continue to see low positivity rates, students in all three buildings will return to the cafeterias and resume normal food service operations.

Q18: What other mitigation measures will remain in effect?

For the time being, the District will continue to utilize all other mitigation efforts including the Cleared4Class daily health screening attestation. The District will also continue the use of other preventative measures including our rigorous cleaning and disinfecting protocols, encouraging passive ventilation by opening windows, and stressing the importance of healthy hygiene practices.

Q19: Is weekly testing still required for unvaccinated school employees?

Yes. The regulation requiring unvaccinated school employees to test has not changed.

Q20: Do individuals who are exhibiting symptoms still need to quarantine?

Yes. Students and staff who are exhibiting symptoms must remain home and should test for COVID-19. The District has an ample supply of home test kits that can be provided to families who are interested in testing their child. If positive, please report the positive result via Cleared4Class. Students and staff who are positive are still required to isolate for a minimum of five days. If negative, please report the negative result via Cleared4Class and to your building's health office and you may report to school.

Q21: Do individuals who test positive need to isolate?

Yes. Any individual who tests positive must isolate for a minimum of five days (day 0 is the first day of symptoms or the date of the day of the positive test for asymptomatic persons). The individual should mark that they are positive on Cleared4Class. The school's health office will contact you.

Q22: Do individuals returning to school after COVID-19 isolation need to wear a mask?

Yes. Isolation ends after 5 full days if the individual is fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved. Individuals are still required to wear a well-fitting mask around others for 5 additional days (day 6 through day 10) after the end of the 5-day isolation period.

Q23: Will the District conduct close contact tracing?

No. The New York State Department of Health no longer requires Districts to conduct close contact tracing. However, if the health office identifies students or staff members who were in close contact with a positive case, those individuals will be notified so that they may monitor their symptoms.

Q24: Will the District continue to notify the school community of positive cases?

Yes. For the time being, the District will continue its practice of sending daily health notifications.

Q25: Will the District continue to supply at home test kits for those who are interested in testing?

Yes. The District has an ample supply of at home test kits that are available for families and staff members to pick up from their school's health office.

Q26: Under what circumstances will the District require individuals to once again wear masks?

The District will adhere to the requirements established by the State Education Department and the Department of Health. Should these Departments reissue a mask requirement, the District will act in compliance with that requirement.

