

February 25, 2022

Dear Manhasset School Community,

Fortunately, we continue to see a steep decline in the overall COVID-19 positivity rates in our area. This encouraging news suggests that we may be approaching a return to pre-pandemic operations. In recognition of the improving positivity rates, we have been actively discussing our layered mitigation strategies both internally and with the Nassau County Department of Health.

The most visible COVID-19 mitigation strategy is that of universal masking. **As of this writing, masks continue to be required inside school buildings and while on District transportation.** As was previously announced, the Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution for the District to adopt a mask optional policy as soon as the State lifts the universal mask requirement inside schools. Governor Hochul stated that she may make a decision regarding the mandate's future as early as Friday, March 4. We are in the process of preparing a FAQ outlining the particulars of a mask optional environment for our school community.

Another mitigation strategy that has been under discussion is physical distancing at lunch. Given current conditions, the Nassau County Department of Health has advised us that we are permitted to reduce physical distancing in our cafeterias. We will be implementing a return to pre-pandemic operations in two steps. First, when students return to school next week, they will see a return of cafeteria tables and the removal of individual desks at all schools. Each building will retain a few desks in their cafeterias for those students who are more comfortable sitting physically distanced. Initially, to maintain reduced density as a mitigation measure, we will maintain two cafeteria locations at the secondary school and continue the rotation of students into the cafeteria at each elementary 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.

The New York State Department of Health no longer requires schools to conduct close contact tracing. The District, however, will continue its practice of notifying the families of individual students of possible exposure to a positive case for self-monitoring. We will also continue to send out health notifications to the community. The District has COVID-19 at-home test kits that are available for families to use, at their option, if their child has had a potential exposure. Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 continue to be required to isolate for a minimum of five days.

As we peel back individual mitigation measures, the remaining mitigation measures take more prominence. 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.

It is our hope that the trend in declining COVID-19 positivity rates continues, so that we can fully return to pre-pandemic operations in our schools. As always, we will provide updates to our school community as more information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gaurav Passi
Acting Superintendent of Schools