

February 15, 2022

Dear Manhasset School Community,

We have come a long way since the start of this pandemic. From a complete shut down two years ago to a full return to in-person instruction and our full offering of extra-curricular and athletic opportunities, we have made significant progress and we have much to celebrate. At the start of this school year, we were determined to give our students as close to a pre-pandemic school experience as possible. While we recognize that there is more to do, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that we have made significant strides toward that goal.

Fortunately, the COVID-19 positivity data suggests that we have moved past the peak of the Omicron surge that occurred in January. Recently, we have seen a steep decline in the overall positivity rates in our area. This encouraging news suggests that we may be closer to taking another step toward pre-pandemic operations. In fact, last week, the Governor declared that masks are no longer required in businesses, and she suggested that changes to the mask requirement for schools may come sometime soon after the February break.

At the February 10 meeting of the Board of Education, the Board formalized their intent to take the next step toward normalcy by unanimously passing a resolution to adopt a mask optional policy as soon as the State lifts the mask requirement in schools. The resolution, which is shown in its entirety at the end of this message, states that masks will become optional in our schools once the State's mask requirement is no longer in effect. This resolution is consistent with the way in which the District has responded to changing mandates from the State and local agencies to whom we are responsible. In short, we have always adapted our practices to remain consistent with State and local requirements. In the meantime, our administration is making plans so we are prepared to support our faculty, staff and students in a mask optional school setting.

To be clear, as of this writing, there is still a state-wide mask requirement inside school buildings. When the State mask requirement is lifted, we will inform the school community and adjust our policy to a mask-optional approach. Importantly, in a mask-optional environment, each individual's decision to wear or not wear a mask will be respected. Should the State requirement be lifted during the school day, the change will be effective the next school day. Masks will still be required for individuals under a quarantine/isolation protocol and, as required by Federal guidelines, on public transportation, including all District transportation.

As you know, the District implemented a multi-layered mitigation strategy to manage the challenges of COVID-19 in our school community, including the Cleared4Class daily health screening attestation and physical distancing during lunch, among other strategies. We are actively discussing these COVID-19 mitigation strategies with the Nassau County Department of Health to assist the District in assessing when these strategies can be pulled back.

I will continue to provide updates to the school community as more information becomes available.

Warmly,

Dr. Gaurav Passi
Acting Superintendent of Schools