

January 25, 2022

Dear Manhasset School Community,

As you know, last evening in the aftermath of the Nassau County Supreme Court ruling on the NYS mask mandate, I requested that the Manhasset school community remain consistent with the State Education Department's (SED) position that schools must continue to follow the mask rule for the time being. SED informed us that they expected a stay of the Court's ruling to be issued automatically upon filing the appeal. It remains unclear if the stay should have been automatically granted. However, the application for a stay was heard by a judge of the NYS Appellate Division earlier today and the stay was granted through Friday, January 28.

This stay keeps the State's mask mandate in place through Friday, January 28. On Friday, the judge will conduct a further hearing to determine whether he will continue the stay beyond that date. For now, through Friday, January 28, all students and staff continue to be required to wear masks while in our school buildings.

We share the community's frustration with the conflicting messages from governing authorities and their legal counsel. It is understandable that there was great confusion today around the mask mandate. The vast majority of students at all three of our schools complied today with the District's request to wear masks.

Less than a dozen students arrived at the Secondary School without masks and were provided with masks by our staff. A handful of students declined to wear masks and were asked to wait in the library while Building and District administrators considered the matter.

At the same time, during morning drop-off, a group of parents gathered outside the Secondary School to voice their concerns over the District's request to remain consistent, for the time being, with SED's position. Simultaneously, other parents who were bringing their children to school notified the police with concerns regarding this gathering. The Nassau County Police Department responded to the Secondary School as a result of these calls.

We met with the parents who had gathered at the Secondary School to ask for their understanding, patience and cooperation while the District awaited clarifying guidance from the State. Given the confusion, we advised students and their parents that we would make the library available today for students who did not want to wear a mask. Several students at their option, chose to remain in the library for the day, where they engaged in remote instruction for their classes.

We recognize that these are emotionally charged times in which it is easy for us to become divided as a school community. However, I know that in this Manhasset community, our students are first in all our hearts and minds.

It is our hope that once the appeals process is finished, the District's path forward with respect to the wearing of masks indoors will be clear for all. As the appeals process plays out in court, please know that we continue to support your children as we strive to create a warm, caring, and safe learning environment for every child. Thank you for your continued partnership during these difficult times.

Warmly,

Dr. Gaurav Passi
Acting Superintendent of Schools