

January 8, 2022

Dear Manhasset School Community,

On August 26, 2021 and again on December 10, 2021, the State reaffirmed the New York State Department of Health's public health regulation that requires universal mask wearing inside public school facilities. Such administrative regulations issued by State agencies, pursuant to the authority of the New York State Legislature, carry the full force of State law.

On January 6, Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, signed Executive Order 1-2022 that seeks to stop all Nassau County governmental agencies from enforcing the State school mask mandate. The executive order also seeks to require all public school district boards of education to hold a vote sometime during the month of January 2022 to determine whether to give students and parents the choice to wear a mask while in school.

In separate statements also issued on January 6, NYS Governor Hochul and NYS Education Commissioner Rosa each responded to County Executive Blakeman's executive order. Governor Hochul asserted that "State government, State laws prevail." Commissioner Rosa responded stating in part, "Counties do not have the legal authority to require boards of education to vote on specific issues. School officers take an oath to obey all legal requirements. The State Education Department expects school boards will follow all legal requirements, including the face-covering regulation."

We have consulted with our legal counsel and have been advised that the education law establishes the Commissioner of Education as the final authority over the State's public schools. As such, there is no change to our indoor mask requirement at this time. Masks are required to be properly worn by all individuals in our school buildings except when eating or drinking.

The announcement of County Executive Blakeman's executive order has prompted a number of parents and community members to write to the Board and to District administration expressing their opinions and concerns on all sides of this topic. We appreciate the community's input, and additional lobbying efforts on this topic can be directed to the Governor's office and the Commissioner of Education who, as of this writing, have the final authority in these matters.

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dr. Betty A. Rosa
Commissioner
NYS Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

We will continue to monitor the State and County actions and will communicate updates with you as appropriate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gaurav Passi, Acting Superintendent of Schools
Manhasset Board of Education

Pat Aitken

Christine Monterosso

Jill Pullano

Erin Royce

Regina Rule