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During the School Committee meeting on February 14, 2022, it was decided that the mask requirement for all Westford Public Schools will continue through March 4, 2022. Following March 4, 2022, the federal mandate for masks to be worn on all school buses and in any of our health clinics will still be in place until that is rescinded or expires on the national level. Additionally, with current DESE and DPH guidance regarding COVID protocols, following the 5-day isolation period for individuals who have tested positive, those individuals must mask for 5 additional days when around others, other than when eating, drinking, or outside.

Even after any of the requirements are lifted, masks will still be optional for individuals choosing to wear them in any of our school buildings. There have been a significant amount of emotions expressed regarding the masking decisions. It is incredibly important that we respect and understand that there are differences of opinion on this matter. We must collectively support each individual's decision whether to wear a mask or not and we will not foster an environment that singles out an individual or groups for their choice.

There has been some confusion as to how all of the mask mandates intersect and or potentially conflict. Currently, WPS is operating under both our local Board of Health mask mandate and the DESE mandate. If the Board of Health decides to lift the town mandate, then the school requirement is still in effect. Conversely, if the Board of Health decided to keep the town mandate in place then the schools would only be able to end their mask requirement on March 4 if the Board of Health allowed for that exemption.

Each group can make decisions to be more restrictive in terms of mask requirements within their own organization, but they can't be less restrictive than the larger governing body.

The schools can be more restrictive than the Town. The Town can be more restrictive than the state. However, the schools have to follow all of the town rules just as the town has to follow all of the state rules.

I hope this helps clarify any questions and that you are able to enjoy a restful, rejuvenating February vacation next week.

Sincerely,
Chris

Dr. Christopher Chew
Superintendent of Schools

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