

ROCKVILLE CENTRE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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March 1, 2022

Dear Community Members and Staff,

The New York State mask mandate put in place by Governor Hochul for schools will be lifted tomorrow, Wednesday, March 2, 2022. Beginning tomorrow, masking for students and staff in the Rockville Centre Public Schools will become optional. The Governor had indicated on Sunday that there would be additional guidance coming out before tomorrow but as of the end of the school day today, there has been no additional guidance issued.

Therefore, as discussed at a previous Board of Education meeting and sent in an earlier District communication, the following plan of action will be put in place for tomorrow:

1. The District will continue to follow our reopening plan where masks are required under the state mask mandate, so now that the mandate is lifted, masks will become optional for students and staff. Students and staff may continue to wear the masks if they so choose. However, one exception to this is that all students/staff returning from quarantine after 5 days will be required to wear a mask for the remaining 5 days of their quarantine period.
2. There has been some question as to whether masks will still be required on school busses due to a statement released by the CDC. Until we receive further legal clarification on this issue, the District is recommending students continue to wear masks while riding the bus.
3. All current social distancing efforts will remain in place. Students will continue to eat lunch spaced apart and not at crowded cafeteria tables. Teachers will refrain from pulling all students onto a small carpet for a reading or other close contact activity.
4. All staff will be vigilant in watching for any student exhibiting COVID symptoms or not acting normally where they may have a headache or fever. Those students will be reported to the nurse and will be sent home if determined to be sick with COVID symptoms.
5. Students will be informed that masking is a choice and they need to be considerate of their classmates. There is to be no bullying or singling out of any kind of students who choose to wear masks or not to wear masks. In addition, there will be no bullying or singling out of any students who have been, or who have not been, vaccinated. Students engaging in any such bullying will be disciplined appropriately.
6. Students will be advised that there are certain staff members they can go and talk to if they have concerns or worries about wearing a mask or not, or being vaccinated or not, or if any other students are making them feel uncomfortable about their own personal choices.
7. If there is a student within 6 feet of another student for more than 15 minutes who tests COVID positive, that student would be subject to quarantine if they are not vaccinated and not wearing a mask.
8. There will NOT be a remote option for students who do not want to come to school because of a mask optional policy. The only remote instruction we will have is for quarantine support for those students who are quarantined or isolating due to COVID protocols.

9. Lastly, there may be other caveats or restrictions imposed by the Governor when final guidance is released by New York State so we need to be cognizant that this plan of action may need further modification if that occurs.

I know this change will be welcome for some and worrisome for others. Our faculty and staff are prepared to manage the emotions and anxiety that this transition is likely to initiate. Be assured that all of our other mitigation practices will remain in place. Our expectation is that the school community will respect each other's choices. We must work together to build a school culture that respects the decisions made by others as it applies to these circumstances. I encourage everyone in the community to stand together so that our students can experience a healthy and happy learning environment for the rest of the school year.

There are home test kits available at each school building. You may pick them up from the security guard at the main entrances of each school after school has started and until school is dismissed for the day so as to avoid conflicts with arrival and dismissal procedures. Test kits will not be sent home with students.

As additional information regarding the mandates is released, we will communicate it with you promptly.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Bartels

Robert A. Bartels
Interim Superintendent of Schools