



NEW HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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February 16, 2022

Dear New Hartford Families and Staff:

I would like to update you on the Mask Requirement and specific COVID-19 protocols that the New Hartford Public Schools have been utilizing over the past two years. I would first like to thank you for all of your patience and understanding during the pandemic. It has been extremely difficult and frustrating for students and staff as the pandemic has been unpredictable over the past two years.

The Governor of Connecticut and the Connecticut State Legislature are allowing school districts the flexibility to allow masks to be optional beginning on February 28, 2022. Masks will still be required on school buses because this is a federal requirement. The Connecticut Department of Public Health and Connecticut Department of Education have the authority to implement mask policies until June 30, 2022. These departments are in the process of developing guidelines that will be shared with districts in the coming week.

The Farmington Valley Health District supports removing the mask mandate for students and staff beginning on February 28, 2022 as well. After consulting with the Farmington Valley Health District, there are specific metrics that have been moving in the right direction over the last several weeks and months.

- Significant decrease in positive cases in our schools**
- Lower community COVID-19 transmission in the town of New Hartford**
- Decrease in hospitalizations**
- Improving vaccination rates in New Hartford and the Farmington Valley Health District**

After analyzing this data and reviewing the new Connecticut State policy on masks, the New Hartford Board of Education has decided to allow students the option of wearing masks beginning on February 28, 2022. Masks are still mandated on school buses because of this federal regulation. Students, Staff and school visitors may choose to wear a mask while in school. Administrators and teachers will not be reminding students to put their mask back on during the course of a school day.

I would also like to update you on the district's current COVID-19 mitigation strategies. With the changes to the district's mask policy, the New Hartford Public Schools will not be "contact tracing" or mandate students to quarantine if they are exposed to another student or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19. The district will not be informing parents or staff members through a letter or email if there is a new positive case in the schools. I have enclosed mitigation strategies and protocols that the district will continue moving forward.

- Social Distancing when appropriate**
- Continue Handwashing Protocols**

- Isolation periods remain for Students/Staff who test positive**
- Students/Staff remain home if they are feeling ill**
- Documentation of positive cases on district website**

We understand that the pandemic is not over and it will continue to be unpredictable over the next several months. We understand that there will be additional positive cases in our district in the future, but the State of Connecticut and the New Hartford Public Schools are in a far different space than we were two years ago. We currently have additional tools to face the challenges of this pandemic than we did two years ago. We will continue to review COVID-19 metrics in our schools and town to determine the best strategies moving forward. We will continue to work with the Farmington Valley Health District and the Connecticut State Department of Education and Connecticut Department of Public Health regarding COVID-19 mitigation efforts and ensure the safety of our students and staff is our highest priority. If there are any additional mandates from the Connecticut State Department of Public Health we will share them with you.

We appreciate all of your cooperation and support during this pandemic and value our partnership with you.

Sincerely,
Brian Murphy
Superintendent of Schools