



Olga Hugelmeyer
Superintendent of Schools

March 4, 2022

Dear Elizabeth Public Schools Professional Learning Community,

On Feb 7, 2022 Governor Murphy announced that **Executive Order 251, the mask mandate for all New Jersey schools, will expire on March 7, 2022.**

In accordance with the expiration of Executive Order 251 and updated guidance from the CDC, as well as consultation with the City of Elizabeth health officer, **Elizabeth Public Schools will make mask wearing in school buildings optional for staff and students effective Monday, March 7, 2022.**

The CDC recently issued updated guidance, which includes new metrics referred to as “[COVID-19 Community Levels](#),” that is intended to help communities and individuals make decisions on prevention strategies based on their local context and their unique needs. The CDC Covid-19 Community Levels are determined by new Covid-related hospital admissions over the previous week and the percentage of hospital beds occupied by Covid patients, as well as new coronavirus cases per 100,000 people over the previous week.

According to the agency, only areas of high risk should require everyone to wear a mask. Based on the new guidelines and current community levels data, the CDC suggest that 70 percent of Americans can now stop wearing masks due to being in the low or medium COVID-19 community level category. Union County is currently in the medium community level.

The CDC also states that at all community levels, people can wear a mask based on personal preference, informed by personal level of risk such as preexisting medical conditions or consideration for the medical conditions of those with whom a person may be in close contact. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. The agency also recommends unvaccinated people should wear masks even in low-risk areas.

We recognize that this announcement may bring up mixed thoughts and feelings throughout our learning community as a transition is made to making the decision of whether or not to wear a mask in school a personal and private choice.

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

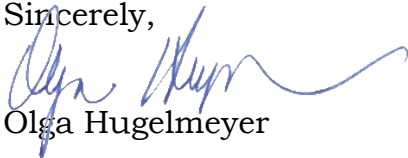
It is imperative that we continue to foster a kind, caring, and empathetic learning community for students, families, and team members by demonstrating respect and understanding. An important step we can all take together as we continue to transition towards a sense of normalcy is to refrain from drawing attention to personal decisions that have been made related to wearing or not wearing masks once the mandate expires.

Please let it be clearly understood that appropriate disciplinary action will be taken to ensure that no students or team members are treated differently or subjected to harassment, intimidation, or bullying based on their decision whether or not to wear a mask in school.

As has been the case since the onset of the pandemic, should further guidance be released by the New Jersey Department of Health or Department of Education, the district will collaborate with our local health official and update our health and safety protocols as appropriate.

Thank you for all you have done to help Elizabeth Public School students continue to succeed as well as your support, patience, and flexibility through these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Olga Hugelmeyer