



February 10, 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians of the Rumson School District,

This past Monday, Governor Murphy announced that the mandating of the wearing of masks inside schools would be lifted effective March 7, 2022. He specifically noted downward trending data and upward trending vaccination rates, and we have seen similar trends here in the Rumson School District. Additionally, with three-quarters of our families responding to our mask survey, 80.5% of respondents preferred moving towards a mask-optional learning environment.

In light of this, **the Rumson School District will be a mask-optional learning environment effective Monday, March 7, 2022.** A mask-optional learning environment would mean that students and staff who wish to remain mask-free are welcome to do so; students and staff who would prefer to wear a mask are also welcome to do so.

In preparation for this transition, our administration and staff will be reviewing existing protocols to ensure alignment with this next step forward to a traditional school environment, including forthcoming guidance – as indicated by the governor in his announcement – from the New Jersey Department of Health. The district will be releasing a plan outlining expectations within our mask-optional learning environment prior to March 7.

Our immediate focus is to prepare our students and staff for the transition. It is the expectation that all students, parents, and staff will join together to ensure every individual's choice within this new learning environment is both respected and supported. We certainly do not want to exchange the massive amount of time spent on contact tracing with an equal amount of time investigating and addressing bullying, harassment, and intimidation issues around this topic. To proactively prepare our students, our Social-Emotional Learning Teams at Forrestdale and Deane-Porter will be developing and delivering education on respecting the choices and privacy of others during their Character Education and Morning Meeting sessions. We ask that you have these same conversations with your children at home.

In the same spirit of support, our guidance team will be reaching out to families of students who have struggled through this pandemic due to heightened anxiety and medical needs to ensure this transition is supportive of their needs.

Thank you for your cooperation, patience, and understanding as we navigate these decisions. Let's support each other as we move towards the greatest extent of normalcy our children have seen in the past two years!

Regards,

Dr. John E. Bormann

Superintendent of Schools

Borough of Rumson School District