



Dr. Adele V. Pecora • Superintendent of Schools

1600 Washington Avenue, Seaford, NY 11783 • Phone: (516) 592-4010 • Fax: (516) 592-4049

January 9, 2022

Dear Seaford Families and Staff,

We hope that you had an enjoyable holiday season and we extend best wishes in this New Year. Last week there were several communications from Governor Hochul, Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa, and our new Nassau County Executive, Mr. Bruce Blakeman, regarding mask wearing in schools and the distribution of COVID tests. We understand the frustrations surrounding these matters. This letter is to clarify our understanding of the current state of these two issues.

Last Thursday, January 6, 2022, Mr. Bruce Blakeman, signed executive orders related to making mask wearing optional in public places in our county, including schools. In this document, he directed each school district's Board of Education in Nassau County to vote in January on whether the mask mandate should continue in each individual school district.

Almost immediately after the County Executive's orders were released, Governor Hochul and NYS Education Commissioner Rosa issued strong statements directing districts to follow the current NYS mandate for the wearing of masks in schools. In her statement, Commissioner Rosa reminded school officers of their oath to obey all legal requirements and that the State Education Department "expects school boards will follow all legal requirements, including the face-covering regulation." Failure to comply with this directive could mean disciplinary consequences for Board members and administrators. A further consequence is that the State Education Department has the authority to withhold state aid when a Board of Education or Superintendent willfully disobeys the law.

As a result, upon our return to school on Monday, January 10, 2022, all students, staff and visitors will be expected to wear masks while inside any of our schools. We are disappointed that current conditions do not permit us to return to a pre-pandemic school environment. As always, we will continue to monitor the COVID positivity rates. Although they currently reflect a surge in positive cases, please know that very few transmissions occurred in our schools. With the protocols we have in place, negligible cases trace back to classrooms. Our schools are safe.

Also, please be aware that Nassau school districts received a message from the Governor's office on Friday stating that the tests we distributed to families last week, all of which had a January 31, 2022 expiration date, **DO NOT** have an approved 90-day FDA extension to that expiration. This message is extremely frustrating because it directly conflicts with what we were told by the State last week. As long as the tests are used this month, they are still considered accurate and acceptable. We have been told that additional tests with extended expiration dates will be distributed to us in the coming days. As soon as we have more information, it will be shared with the community.

We are hopeful that the COVID positivity rate will decrease in the coming months and our district will be given the latitude to lessen mask restrictions. Thank you for your patience, understanding and continued support.

Wishing you and your families health and happiness in 2022!

Yours in Seaford Pride,

The Seaford Board of Education and Central Administration