



June 7, 2021

Dear Port Jervis Learning Community,

As questions regarding mask requirements are understandably increasing based on recent events, infection and vaccination metrics, and the expected temperatures over the next few weeks, I want to provide a brief update on the topic. First and foremost, it is important to highlight that the mask requirements are not a local decision. School districts are not able to disregard what is being directed by the Departments of Health and New York State Education Department. Additionally, any changes to protocols, in addition to being in compliance with law, must result from following the established process of stakeholder input. Additionally, these changes must be reviewed by the district's medical director and attorneys.

The Port Jervis City School District's COVID-19 Reopening Committee met this afternoon to discuss the mask requirement protocol in our school setting. While there has not been an official change to Executive Order 202.60, **earlier today Governor Cuomo announced that masks were no longer required when students are outside of the school building.** This change represents a change in protocol that will benefit our students, while still ensuring the safety of all involved.

Governor Cuomo reported that the indoor mask requirements remain unchanged. As stated in the directives from the NYS Department of Health and NYS Education Department, masks are required while in the school setting. Our school district is required by law to continue to follow this directive. However, it is essential to highlight the following:

- Our faculty and staff will continue to increase the amount of opportunities for students to engage in learning activities outside of the school building. This will allow for additional time without the requirement of wearing a mask. *(Remote students: Please allow for flexibility with log in times and expect more independent learning modalities as classes take increased outdoor mask breaks.)*
- Our faculty and staff will continue to increase the frequency and duration of mask breaks while in the classrooms.
- Students will continue to be physically distanced to the greatest extent practicable throughout the school day to allow for the increased frequency and duration of the mask breaks.
- Faculty and staff continue to be permitted to take frequent mask breaks when physically distanced from others.

Once again, the numerous requests to end the mask requirements are noted and received, but our school district must comply with the current regulations and laws. Our committee, medical director, and administration are steadfast in keeping the health and safety of all in our learning community at the forefront, and maintain the hope that by communicating the above will also provide clarification on the commitment to have realistic expectations for mask wearing while in the school buildings. The ideals listed above comply with the requirements, but allow for flexibility to the greatest extent possible.

Thank you for your continued support and patience.

Mike Rydell
Superintendent of Schools