



March 4, 2022

Dear Families,

Today, the mayor announced new mask policies for schools. Here is what to expect.

### Citywide Policies

**Masks are optional indoors.** Starting Monday, K – 12 students and all staff are not required to wear masks indoors.

**Masks are still allowed.** Schools will still give out masks to anyone who requests them.

**Masks are still required for pre-K.** Students younger than five must continue to be masked inside school.

**Masks are required after having COVID.** People returning to school after having COVID are required to wear tight-fitting masks in school from the sixth through tenth days after testing positive.

**Masks are encouraged after exposure.** Masks are “strongly recommended... when an individual has been exposed or potentially exposed to COVID-19.”

## How CPE1 Will Implement the Citywide Policies

**We are honoring all choices.** CPE1 staff understand that some families will choose masks and others will not. Children will be welcomed and supported either way.

**Other routines will not change.** For now, we are staying with the extra measures that worked for much of this year. That means we will wash hands frequently, keep the windows open, continue having lunch in all classrooms, etc.

**Adults will help children honor individual choice.** Adults will support children in understanding that some classmates are choosing to remove masks. We will discuss not pressuring one another – directly or indirectly – take make a different choice. We will help children find kind ways to make requests, such as asking for more distance if needed.

**Tell your teachers your wish for your child.** Please tell the teachers if you want them to remind your child about your masking preferences.

**Teachers won't give a third reminder.** Please share your preferences with your child. A teacher will remind your child of your wishes once or twice, but not throughout the day. That should be a discussion at home.

## Why I am Staying Masked at School

**My risk and community risk.** Yes, we will be living with COVID for a long time, and yes, COVID rates are relatively low this week. However, my job connects me to more than a hundred families, some of whom have serious health concerns. The risk to me is much less than the risk to them. My mask acknowledges others' higher risk.

**If pre-K is masked, then I'm masked.** Masks are still required for pre-K. No one *likes* wearing a mask all day, especially four year-olds. Imagine eating an ice cream sundae all by yourself while a four-year old watched! Children want what others have. Until our youngest children have a choice, I'll do what they have to.

**Children who feel worried should see allies.** COVID has been stressful for *adults*. For some children who were only eight or six or four when the pandemic began, fear has been hard to manage. An order from the mayor's office won't instantly wipe away children's anxiety. As many kids adjust, my own mask shows that it's just fine to stay masked if you feel safer that way.

I'm staying both masked and optimistic. After two long years of restrictions and adjustments, I'm hopeful about a new, safer, and better version of 'normal' school. We'll take another step, together, on Monday.

The city's letter about the new policy follows on the next page. Thanks to all.

Gabriel

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## March 4, 2022

Our “Stay Safe, Stay Open” plan has succeeded in allowing us to keep New York City public schools open and remain among the safest places for young people to be during the COVID-19 pandemic. As our schools did their part in reducing transmission rates, so have New Yorkers as a whole. We are pleased to announce that as a result, we will be implementing changes in our current COVID-19 health and safety policies in our schools in accordance with the latest guidance.

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## COVID-19 Health and Safety

### Face Covering Policy Updates

We are pleased to announce that face coverings will be optional on school grounds for students in kindergarten through grade 12 beginning Monday, March 7.

To maintain the safety of our staff and students, we will continue to practice strict COVID-19 protocols, including increased ventilation, a daily health screening, and test kit distribution. Wearing a face covering will become optional indoors, outside, and on school buses. Anyone

who chooses to wear a mask may continue to do so, and your child may request a mask from their school if they need one.

The indoor mask mandate is still active for children in LYFE, EarlyLearn (Infants & Toddlers), 3-K, Pre-K, and 4-10 classrooms. These children, ages two years old and older, and all staff in these classrooms, must continue to wear a face covering indoors. Since children under the age of five are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine, face coverings remain our strongest defense against COVID-19 for our youngest learners.

In addition, any staff member or student in grades Kindergarten or higher returning on Day 6 following a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or after having COVID-19 symptoms without taking a COVID test is still **required** to wear a well-fitting mask at all times on school property through Day 10.

Face coverings are strongly recommended for any staff member or student who knows they have been exposed to COVID-19 within the previous 10 days. Mask wearing is still required in medical rooms and nurses' offices, as well as in School Based Health Centers. Nurses will have face coverings on hand for anyone entering who may need one.

## Social Distancing

There are no requirements for social distancing in public spaces, including classrooms, cafeterias and auditoriums.

## Visitor Policy

Visitors are still required to show proof of vaccination and complete the daily health screening ([healthscreening.schools.nyc](https://healthscreening.schools.nyc)) before entering a DOE building.

## Vaccination

As a reminder, vaccination is the best tool we have to fight COVID-19 and to keep our schools safe for all our students. Children ages 5 and older are eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19. If your child is eligible but not yet vaccinated against COVID-19, you can make an appointment for vaccination at [vaccinefinder.nyc.gov](https://vaccinefinder.nyc.gov) or call 311 to find a vaccine site near you. The vaccine is free for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration or insurance status. We thank you for your continued partnership.