CHANGES TO CURRENT MASK POLICIES

Good Afternoon CSDNB,

The Connecticut Department of Public Health and the Connecticut State Department of Education’s most recent guidance advises communities to transition the management of COVID-19 in schools from a pandemic emergency response model towards a more local public health approach.

When applied in the PreK-12 school setting, this model focuses more on response to clusters of cases, outbreaks, evidence of ongoing transmission in schools, and/or significant increases in community transmission risk and relies less on individual case investigation, contact tracing, and quarantining of staff and students following school exposures. At the school level, we will no longer be contact tracing individual cases. However, if there is an increase in cases in a particular classroom or setting we will be contact tracing and responding as needed.

Given the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines, at-home testing, and declining case counts and hospitalization, the Board of Education met in a Special Meeting on Thursday, February 24 to discuss revisions to current policy 4118.237/4218.237 Face Masks/Coverings (Personnel) and current policy 5141.8 Face Masks and Coverings (Students).

In alignment with this guidance and adopted policy revisions (see link below), masks will be optional in the Consolidated School District of New Britain beginning Tuesday, March 1 for students, staff and visitors. In addition, masks will no longer be required for students on buses or vans that are operated by public or private school systems. This includes our preschool programming as well.

It’s important to note that any CSDNB community members who are more comfortable wearing a mask should continue to do so if they wish. Please see the revised policy here: Student and Personnel Revised Mask Policy. Please note, the superintendent, in consultation with the New Britain Health Department, may reimpose a mask requirement for up to 2 weeks in response to an outbreak in a school or a rapid rise in community infection rates. This may be extended with Board approval.
Vaccination is one of the most important mitigation strategies. Also, we continue to recommend that staff and students self-test when they are experiencing covid-like symptoms or if they know or believe they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. **Individuals who are positive for COVID-19 but who are well enough to return to school during days 6-10 of their recovery will, in accordance with Center for Disease Control guidelines and State Department of Public Health recommendations, still be required to wear a mask when they are around other individuals.** In following the most current CDC and DPH guidance and recommendations, the individual may remove their mask when eating or drinking.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a [new framework](#) on Friday, February 25 to monitor the level of COVID-19 in communities that includes hospitalizations, hospital capacity, and cases. This new approach focuses on preventing hospitals and health care system from being overwhelmed and directing prevention efforts toward protecting people at high risk for severe illness. This tool assists local communities with their decision making.

In collaboration with the local Health Department, CSDNB will continually monitor the COVID-19 Community Level. The COVID-19 Community Level will inform CDC recommendations on prevention measures, like masking and testing. The guidelines include a [color-coded system available on the CDC website](#) of “Low,” “Medium,” and “High” which are scheduled to be updated weekly:

- **Low—Green:** Residents in these counties should stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if they have symptoms.
- **Medium—Yellow:** Residents who are at high risk for severe illness in these counties should talk to their health care providers about when they need to wear a mask and take other precautions. These residents should also stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if they have symptoms.
- **High—Orange:** Residents in these counties should wear a mask indoors in public; stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if they have symptoms. Additional precautions may be needed for residents who are at high risk for severe illness.

We will continue to have masks for students and staff who request them. We will also continue to have self-tests available for staff members and the families of ill students and we are scheduled to receive an additional shipment of tests from the CT Department of Education this week.