

June 10, 2022

Hello Preschool Family Community,

As the school year winds down, we are sending this communication to share information and bring closure regarding the District's masking mandate for our PreK students.

The District has decided that **we will continue to implement "mandatory indoor masking" for all of our PreK sites through the end of the academic school year.** We understand that some families may be disappointed by the District's decision, however, we believe that this is the best decision for the health and wellness of our PreK student body as Essex County's COVID Activity Level Index (CALI) remains high and many students in this grade level are still not eligible for vaccination.

Below are the results from the "PreK Indoor Mask Optional" survey that were submitted in April 2022. Out of a population of 294 preschool students we received responses from 122 families (41% response rate). A visual link of the results can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3myhLRn>

Audience	# of Submissions	Do you think it's time for SOMSD to make masks optional indoors?	*If indoor masks were optional, would you still have your child(ren) wear one?	If the District decides to make masks optional, are there any situations where masks should remain mandatory?
Parent /Guardians	122	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes: 60% ● No: 35% ● Unsure: 5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes: 34% ● No: 60% ● Unsure: 6% 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In spaces that hold large indoor gatherings: 56% 2. Mask should be optional at all times: 44%

Since our May community update (<https://bit.ly/3l6wms>) we are thankful that the rise in outbreaks in our District over the past couple of weeks have begun to subside. As we previously stated, the latest COVID Activity Level Index (CALI) update released from state yesterday [<https://bit.ly/399YEQO>], shows that Essex County is still in high transmission mode. Therefore, we are still **strongly recommending that all K-12 students/staff consider masking while indoors and on the bus.** In addition, through the end of the school year we will continue to **require mandatory indoor masking** in the following cases:

1. During large indoor gatherings including, but not limited to, large assemblies, plays, art shows, concerts, upcoming moving up ceremonies;
2. For individuals who are returning to school after COVID-positive isolation on days 6-10;
3. As recommended or required by the DOH (i.e., significant increased transmission, outbreak).

See some important reminders below:

- Outdoor masking is 'mask optional'; this includes: pick-up and drop-off, recess and outdoor play;
- The District is continuing the practice of recommending isolation of COVID positive individuals (home or lab) and those with 'COVID-compatible' symptoms waiting for a test result;
- For the remainder of the current academic school year, virtual learning will continue to be offered to students who are: **a) Unable to attend school in-person due to testing COVID-positive, (or); b) who have COVID-compatible symptoms and are awaiting lab test results; and c) household members of these individuals (a and b)**
- Contact tracing will continue for the Public PreK community (for close contacts of an individual with a positive lab test);



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- Continue to report positive COVID home or lab confirmed test results to your bldg. principal/director and school nurse;
- The DOH recommends that a home test be followed up by a lab test (PCR or Rapid)

We thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.

South Orange & Maplewood School District