



PINE HILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Central Administration

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Melissa Williams, Ed.D., Superintendent Cherie Bratty, Ed.D., Business Administrator

March 2, 2022

Dear Families,

First, I would like to thank the Pine Hill School District community for your patience and understanding as we continue to navigate the 2021-2022 school year. Guidance has been revised since the original announcement, and we wanted to be sure to address as much as possible in this communication.

As you are aware, Governor Murphy announced that effective March 7, 2022, the statewide mask mandate in schools would be ending. The district has consistently followed the executive orders of the governor and the recommendations of the New Jersey Department of Health. As such, **effective March 7, 2022, face masks will be optional** for students, staff, and visitors **while in the schools and when riding school buses**. The district will continue to recommend that individuals wear a mask indoors, but will not mandate it. The district also **reserves the right to reimpose mandatory mask-wearing** in school and on buses should there be a sudden increase in positive cases, a schoolwide outbreak, or data should change.

In addition to the CDC and NJDOH guidance, other factors aided in this decision.

- Camden County has been downgraded to level “yellow” or moderate risk.
- Data indicates that the spread of COVID has steadily declined in New Jersey since its peak in January 2022.
- Daily positive cases for district students and staff have decreased by over 90% since the start of 2022.
- The availability of vaccines, boosters, testing sites, and masks provides us with more tools that individuals can use to protect themselves compared to prior months.

Some additional considerations:

- Students and staff should exercise the choice to wear masks based on their comfort and/or parental guidance. **Bullying and intimidation over the wearing or not wearing of a face mask will not be tolerated.** We ask all families to have an open conversation with their child(ren) on this topic.
- If the governor should reinstate an executive order requiring masks in public schools, **the district will comply.**
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact their school nurse to update their child’s vaccination status. Individuals that are not up to date with their vaccine status and choose to unmask after March 7 **will continue to be subject to quarantine guidelines if identified as a close contact.**

- Families should keep their children home when sick, are displaying signs of COVID, waiting on test results, or have tested positive. **Quarantines will continue based on close contact and/or symptoms.**

Protocols that will continue:

- COVID mitigation procedures such as the 90 day spray, social distancing, increased airflow, and handwashing stations.
- Students and staff must wear a mask when entering the nurse's office or the district's COVID testing site.
- District teams and groups visiting other school locations will be required to follow the guidelines of the home district.

Please visit the district's website (pinehill.k12.nj.us) for more information including signs and symptoms to look for, the district's daily COVID Tracker, and instructions for students wishing to be tested. You may also reach out to your child's school nurse with specific questions related to illness.

It is my hope that we can continue to work together to keep our schools safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Melissa Williams, Ed.D.
Superintendent