

February 21, 2022

Dear Members of the Garfield School Community:

As per the announcement by Governor Murphy on February 7, 2022, the universal statewide mask mandate for schools and childcare settings will be lifted, effective Monday, March 7th. Individual schools, districts, and childcare centers now have the choice of requiring masks in schools or moving to make masks/face coverings optional for students and staff.

The Garfield District will revise our current protocol and implement a “masks optional” policy in our schools and offices for students, staff, and visitors, effective March 7, 2022. It is important to note that masks will continue to be required on all school buses since a federal mandate remains in effect for all public transportation.

Parents are asked to utilize all resources available when making the decision on masking that best meets the needs of the individual child and family. Once parents have made the decision, it is important to speak to the child regarding that choice since our teachers and administrators will not be responsible for managing the mask wearing of each individual child. It is also necessary to reinforce the need to respect the choice of others. Schools are expected to take disciplinary action in instances of bullying should they arise due to another student’s choice regarding masking in school.

The current district quarantine protocols for staff and students who test positive for Covid-19 or have been identified as close contacts to someone who tested positive for Covid-19 will remain in effect. Governor Murphy also announced that, prior to the mandate being lifted on March 7th, the Department of Health will release new guidance to help school districts update their policies to ensure safe learning environments. The Garfield District will revise the current protocols to align with the new guidance from the Department of Health once it is released, and it will immediately be communicated to members of our school community.

The district will continue to follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against Covid-19. This means daily cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, and phones.

Our current district Covid -19 positivity rate is low, and we are hopeful that this trend continues into the spring and end of the school year. We ask that all members of our school community continue to do their part in prioritizing the health and safety of themselves and others. Staff and students should stay at home when sick, get tested if Covid-19 symptoms are present, and follow all routine protocols such as handwashing, social distancing, avoiding crowds and unventilated areas, and adhere to the CDC recommendations for both domestic and international travel.

On behalf of the district administration and Garfield Board of Education, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of our district’s Covid policies and practices over the last two years. We look forward to a return to some sense of normalcy with the revised “**mask optional**” policy and wish you and your families good health and continued success in the days ahead.

Kind Regards,  
*Anna Sciacca*

Superintendent of Garfield Public Schools

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