



246 Warren Turnpike Road
 Falls Village, CT 06031
 Central Office (860) 824-0855
 Business Office (860) 824-0875
 Fax (860) 824-1271
www.region1schools.org

February 24, 2022

Dear Region 1 Parents/Caregivers and Staff:

As you are aware from news in the media, the Governor and the State legislators have been working together to guide all Connecticut citizens as we transition from a pandemic emergency response model toward a model that aligns with a more standard public health approach to the management and control of respiratory viral diseases. Dr. Manisha Juthani, The Commissioner of the CT Department of Public Health (DPH), has indicated that virus trends have been rapidly decreasing and are expected to continue to do so. This diminishing number of COVID cases (resulting in much lower hospitalization rates) combined with the availability of vaccines and COVID-19 treatments has reduced the need for State-wide universal controls with respect to the spread of COVID-19. However, Dr. Juthani has acknowledged that local municipalities and organizations (i.e., school systems) could experience periodic outbreaks or community spread of COVID-19 and has stated that the most effective way to address those situations, as they arise, is at the local level.

As a result of the shift to an alternative approach to controlling the spread of COVID-19, the State Department of Education (CSDE) has partnered with the CT DPH to create a set of guidelines that will help schools safely manage their school environments at this time. These guidelines become effective **in Region 1 on Tuesday, March 1, 2022.**

As we have done in the past, Region 1 administrators and nurses have worked together with the Region 1 Medical Advisor to create a Region 1 document entitled [Changes to School COVID-19 Safety Practices](#) as a reference tool for staff, parents/caregivers and students. This document aligns with the DPH/CSDE guidance and includes the following significant changes to COVID-19 mitigation practices:

- While continuing to be recommended, **face masks/coverings will no longer be required** while students and staff are in school and/or participating in athletic and/or other extracurricular activities.
 - Please note that Staff will **not** be monitoring students who are sent to school with masks.
Students and parents/caregivers will be responsible for their own choices.
 - **It is expected that masked and unmasked individuals will treat each other with respect.**
- Individual case investigation and contact tracing will be discontinued as the focus on virus management shifts to clusters of cases and less on individual investigation of positive cases.
- Social distancing will not be required; however, where possible, all Region 1 schools will continue to maintain their classrooms and public spaces such that students are at a minimum of three feet from one another.

Safety protocols that will continue to be implemented are as follows:

- **Per Federal health and safety guidelines, all students and adults must continue to wear masks/face coverings on the school bus. This requirement is expected to be rescinded by March 18, 2022.**
- **Staff and families must continue to inform the school nurse if they become positive with COVID-19.**
 - The Superintendent must continue to report all positive cases to the CT CPH, and
 - The Central Office staff will continue to update the Region 1 website daily as new cases are reported in each school.

Superintendent: Lisa Carter
lcarter@region1schools.org

Asst. Superintendents: Dr. Scott Fellows/Jill Pace
sfellows@region1schools.org / jp pace@region1schools.org

Business Manager: Samuel Herrick
sherrick@region1schools.org

- **All staff and families should not come to school if they are sick** and should continue to follow the updated [Region 1 Health and Safety Protocols](#) for isolation and quarantine. **Students or staff who develop symptoms that are similar to those associated with COVID-19 during the school day will be sent home.**
- School-based weekly PCR testing will continue as long as the CSDE continues to fund this effort.
- Schools will continue to hold vaccination clinics as long as they are available through the CT DPH-sponsored program.

We understand that parents/caregivers, staff and students may be anxious about all of the changes that are being proposed in the CT DPH/CSDE recommendations. Please know that we will continue to closely monitor the incidence of COVID-19 in our schools as well as in our communities. **The new CT CPH guidelines allow us to work with the Region 1 Medical Advisor and the staff at the Torrington Area Health and Sharon Health Districts to determine the need to return to more restrictive mitigation practices, including the use of masks/face coverings** in these circumstances:


- Surges in community spread of COVID-19 due to the emergence of new variants, waning immunity, and/or other factors
- Outbreaks in particular schools or classrooms
- Worsening conditions related to COVID-19 disease transmission [in their communities](#) and/or [in surrounding areas](#).

Thus, it is evident that continued reporting with respect to positive COVID-19 cases is extremely important to enable accurate identification of, and action on clusters of cases as they arise, be that in a school, a classroom, or throughout the Region.

As you can understand from reading this letter, the shift that is currently occurring throughout the State and the country represents a completely different approach to managing COVID-19 that goes beyond the discontinuation of a mask/face covering requirement. The low incidence of COVID-19 in all of our schools allows us to make the shift that the CT DPH is recommending. Additionally, the percentage of fully vaccinated individuals in several of the towns in Region 1 is quite high. We thank all of you for your caution throughout the pandemic to ensure everyone's safety and hope that you will continue to comply with the safety precautions that remain in place.

This letter and the accompanying documents contain much important information. Thank you for taking the time to read all of the material. Please reach out to your Principal or to me if you have any questions. We want to support all of the Region 1 community as we make this transition. Our focus remains on keeping everyone safely in school at all times.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

FA3841308E6A444...
Lisa B. Carter
Superintendent

Superintendent: Lisa Carter
lcarter@region1schools.org

Asst. Superintendents: Dr. Scott Fellows/Jill Pace
sfellows@region1schools.org / jpace@region1schools.org

Business Manager: Samuel Herrick
sherrick@region1schools.org