



March 7, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and Education Department (NYSED) have issued follow-up guidance to its decision to lift the school mask mandate earlier this week. We would like to share a few updates on this guidance and review the current safety protocols in place in our schools.

Masking

Masking is now optional at school, on school buses, and school functions. Anyone who wishes to wear a mask may do so, and everyone's mask preference will be shown equal respect.

The state has issued two exceptions to the mask optional decision. It is the responsibility of individuals in these situations to mask when in schools, on school buses, and at school activities:

- For any student or staff member who has tested positive, masking is required once returning from five days of isolation on days 6-10 in order to attend school and school functions.
- Those students and staff who know that they have been exposed to a positive individual are to mask for ten days after exposure and to test for COVID using a home test.

Individual COVID Protocols

Students and staff with symptoms are to stay home and test with a home test if available. If negative and fever-free with symptoms improving, student or staff member can return to school. It is no longer required to obtain a test administered by a medical provider.

What to do with test results or if your child feels ill:

- If your child tests positive, keep your child at home and report the result to the county through their reporting portal at this link: <https://forms.chemungcountyny.gov/covidpaperwork/>. Please also contact your school nurse to give the district this information for attendance purposes.
- If your child has symptoms but tests negative on a home test, keep your child at home until your child is fever-free without medication and symptoms are improving. Report proof of the negative test result to your school nurse. Photos of the test are acceptable.
- If you learn that your child is a direct contact from a positive COVID exposure, according to the NYSDOH, "exposure is not a reason to remove from the classroom or school setting." Exposed individuals should mask in school for 10 days after exposure.

If you have questions about these protocols, please contact the Chemung County Health Department at 607-737-2028.

continued

Testing

- The district will continue COVID testing as a preventative measure for athletics and certain extracurricular activities, as well as pool testing for unvaccinated staff.
- We will continue to provide home tests to families and staff as long as we continue to receive a supply of tests from the state. Note that the district is not charged for these tests.
- Home tests are available at all district schools. Those wishing to obtain tests should visit their school's main office.

Health & Safety

We continue to clean and sanitize schools and offices as we have been doing during the pandemic.

Distancing

Although there are no specific requirements for physical distancing at this time, it is recommended that classrooms and transportation settings maximize physical space whenever possible. This includes music and physical education space, as well as extracurricular and athletic activities. The district will continue to maximize spacing whenever possible.

As a reminder, protocols and information are on our website at <https://horseheadsdistrict.com/HCSDealthsafetyguide2021-22.cfm>.

If you have questions, please contact your school's main office. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Douglas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "D".

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools