



311 Flower City Park
Rochester, NY 14615
P: 585.458.3786
F: 585.647.8717
www.nazarethschools.org

March 2, 2022

Dear Nazareth Parents and Guardians,

There is a lot of information in this letter so I ask that you read it through carefully and keep it handy.

As you heard on the news, Governor Kathy Hochul ended the state mask requirement in schools effective today, March 2, 2022. The Governor made this decision based on the analysis of several key COVID-19 data trends and much consultation. *The announcement also indicated that other mitigation measures should remain in place.*

Last night, all schools received a communication from the NYS Department of Health and the NYS Education Department with their latest masking guidance and a clear message that all *other safety protocols remain in place.* A zoom meeting with Dr. Mendoza this morning with all non-public school administrators stressed the same safety measures. The last thing any of us want after all this time being cautious is to have a spread in school due to lack of masks. COVID has not gone away.

Yesterday at our faculty meeting, we discussed the next steps for our school. We kept in mind that the top priority of every decision we have made since the start of COVID two years ago has been the health and safety of every child and staff member. We also recognized that what we do in school affects the health and well-being of every family.

Nazareth will move to an optional mask policy, however, mask wearing is still highly recommended. Starting today, parents can choose to have their children wear a mask or not in school. We ask that parents make this decision and not the children. Certainly, the children could be part of the discussion so they understand the reasons behind a choice. However, we feel the little ones are too young to decide, and peer pressure could easily influence older students if the choice was theirs alone.

It is important to note from the latest communications from the state and local levels:

- **This new policy only applies to masks.** They are optional, but still highly recommended.
- The NYS Health Department and the NYS Department of Education have not changed any of the other mandates that have been in place. **Schools must continue the strategies and protocols that have helped to ensure the health and safety of their school communities.**
- Whether one wears a mask or not, we expect everyone's choice to be honored and respected.
- The rules for exposure, tracing, testing, isolation and quarantine are updated and very clear. Example: In all settings, according to the NYSDOH, masking continues to be required upon return from isolation during days 6-10. Sr. Marlene will be sharing more of the specifics re: procedures if there are cases at school.
- Schools can still mandate that everyone wear a mask in school if so needed.
- Schools are strongly encouraged to use other mitigation measures including ventilation, encouragement of vaccinations, testing, and access to free home testing kits.

At this time:

- ✓ Nazareth will continue its protocols for social distancing, frequent hand-washing, use of hand sanitizer, cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
- ✓ Anyone showing COVID symptoms should stay home, contact your doctor for evaluation, and contact our school nurse for next steps.
- ✓ Nazareth will no longer check temperatures at the doors. We trust that parents will not send a child to school with a fever.
- ✓ Nazareth will take small steps over the final months toward easing out of this pandemic safely. The children know the rules for taking masks off at meals and for snacks. Only a few have tested those rules. The students have been taking mask breaks in PE. We will now try no masks on the playground, unless a parent specifically requests the mask stays on when outside.

FYI – On another note, Sr. Marlene Pape has about 50 **at home COVID tests** left to give out. These are available on a first come, first serve basis. Let her or our main office know if you would like one.

I thank you again for your support through these two years. Your cooperation and trust have kept our school going as safely as possible. We appreciate your efforts for safety outside of school as well.

We will post our updated policy on our website and the latest information from the state. As has happened for two years, mandates and guidance can change overnight.

Let us finish this year together strong and healthy, keeping the well-being of others in mind.

Peace and blessings,
Sr. Margaret Mancuso