



# Colchester School District

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CSD Community,

We are writing to provide an update on universal masking requirements at schools in our district. There was a press conference today with State officials and health experts who announced upcoming changes to COVID-19 mitigation measures in schools and how the recent changes in masking recommendations from the CDC will impact students in Vermont. Here's what to expect moving forward. For clarity, we have listed changes and timelines by school.

- **COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL:** The AOE has verified that CHS is over 80% vaccinated. Starting tomorrow, Friday, March 4, masks will no longer be required inside CHS.
- **COLCHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL:** Data that our district compiled from the VT Immunization Registry shows CMS students are just over 80% vaccinated. The data from the AOE shows just under 80%, however, the AOE noted that their calculations were made using enrollment data from October, whereas our data was gathered using current enrollment information. Starting tomorrow, Friday, March 4, masks will no longer be required inside CMS.
- **MALLETTS BAY SCHOOL, PORTERS POINT SCHOOL, UNION MEMORIAL SCHOOL:** At the press conference, officials announced that starting on Monday, March 14, the state will be eliminating school-specific mitigation measures above and beyond statewide guidance. This means that starting on Monday, March 14, masks will no longer be required inside any of our elementary schools.
- **PRESCHOOL AT MALLETTS BAY SCHOOL:** Early education programs were included in today's announcement. Keeping in line with changes at the elementary level, starting on Monday, March 14, masks will no longer be required in preschool.

## **DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION:**

The CDC also updated their requirements for mask-wearing on public transportation. We are going to align our masking policies for district transportation based on what school/grade level the bus is transporting.

- Starting tomorrow, masks will be optional on CMS/CHS buses and district transportation when the passengers are in grades 6-12.
- Masks will continue to be required on all elementary buses and district transportation with passengers in grades PK-5 until Monday, March 14.
- **\*\*CMS students who ride a MBS bus must wear a mask on the bus until Monday, March 14.**

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## **RATIONALE, MORE INFORMATION, AND OTHER CHANGES**

The State is transitioning from school-specific COVID-19 prevention and mitigation recommendations to general health guidance for all Vermonters. This means that schools will not have different rules or recommendations than the general public. The CDC is now making COVID-19 recommendations based on [“Community Levels”](#). Levels can be low, medium, or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area. Chittenden County is classified as medium, which means that the CDC no longer recommends universal indoor mask-wearing in PK-12 and early education settings.

Both CDC and State officials have stressed that at this stage in the pandemic, universal masking is no longer necessary from a risk perspective. The decision to mask has shifted to an individual level and should be based on specific circumstances and risks. We want our students, families, and staff to know how important it is to respect one’s personal choice to mask. The district is working to make the transition to optional masking as smooth as possible. We will be talking with students about what respecting mask choice looks like in school and we’re asking for help from families to make this message clear. Please, have conversations with your children to support their tolerance, respect, and kindness towards others. Encourage them to be mindful that everyone’s situation is different and has unique variables. While some may feel relief and happiness to see an end to universal masking, the endemic phase of COVID-19 may be scary and nerve-racking for others.

This announcement is another strong indication from top officials that we are moving forward to a new version of “normal”. Over the next week, administrators will also begin to review other mitigation measures that have been implemented over the past two years to determine the timeline for potential changes to things like lunches, arrival and/or dismissal procedures, field trips, etc.

Lastly, we need to stress the importance of staying home when sick. Anyone with symptoms should not be coming to school. The district has rapid tests available to anyone who needs them. Have your student get a kit from the school nurse or contact them directly if you’d like them to send one home.

Thank you for your continued support and we will continue to keep you updated.

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