



## Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you may already know, on Feb. 27, Governor Hochul announced that masks will not be required at schools statewide effective Wednesday, Mar. 2. This decision aligns with new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state trends in COVID-19 positivity and hospitalization rates.

The new CDC guidance released on Feb. 25 recommends that masks not be required in schools in communities designated as low to medium risk for COVID-19. Gov. Hochul announced Sunday that the mask mandate for all New York schools would be ending and that counties with higher risk could still decide to impose their own school mask requirements. **This has been confirmed by the NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) which has recently released initial guidance on this topic.**

Currently, the CDC has identified Oneida County as a low-risk community. With this designation, and in consideration of the Oneida County Executive's recent statement in support of lifting the mask requirements in schools, the school mask mandate for the Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES ended effective Wednesday, Mar. 2 and students and staff are no longer required to wear masks in BOCES facilities or on the BOCES campus.

- **Exception:** per the recent NYSDOH guidance, masking continues to be required for students and staff upon return from isolation during days six through 10 after a COVID-19 infection. Mask wearing is also strongly recommended for 10 days after a known COVID-19 exposure.

Although masks are no longer required at schools, the OHM BOCES respects the choice for anyone who continues to wear a mask. Masks will remain available for any student, staff member or visitor who wishes to continue wearing them.

Responding to changes in COVID-19 transmission rates with a variety of mitigation strategies, including mask wearing, continues to be a priority at the OHM BOCES. We will continue monitoring our regional COVID-19 data and following the NYSDOH COVID-19 guidelines for schools to keep our students, staff and community safe. **As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, further changes to COVID-19 mitigation may occur, and will be communicated to you.**

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding throughout this pandemic amid all of the changes that have come.

Sincerely,

Assistant Superintendent  
for Instructional Programs and Professional Learning