



**Department
of Health**

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New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Dear Colleagues:

Over the past two years, through unwavering support to students and families, we have bravely faced challenging times. Our schools have been at the forefront of herculean efforts to sustain the education of our children.

On March 2, the statewide requirement for masks in schools will end. This step is taken as the current COVID-19 surge clearly is subsiding. A new guidance for schools has been issued by the New York State Department of Health. Its preparation was a joint effort with the State Education Department that involved extensive consultation with education stakeholders. This guidance also considers the most recent guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which ended its recommendation for masks in schools for most settings.

New York State has long been a champion for creating a respectful, civil, and open place to learn and work. The elimination of the state-wide universal mask mandate in schools will be met with relief by some, and concern and apprehension by others. This step is an opportunity for school leaders to reflect in leading conversations and interactions among individuals who have different beliefs and opinions. It is imperative that those making the personal choice to wear or not wear a mask, when it is not mandated, are not stigmatized, bullied, or made to feel uncomfortable.

Thank you for your ongoing work. Together, and with the assistance of this guidance, we will ensure that all students in our state have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

Mary T. Bassett, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health

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