

GRAND ISLE SUPERVISORY UNION

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At yesterday's press conference Secretary of Education Dan French, along with State officials and health experts, announced upcoming changes to COVID-19 guidelines for schools; and how the recent changes in masking recommendations from the CDC will impact students in Vermont. Here's what to expect moving forward:

- **Folsom School:** Data that our district compiled from the VT Immunization Registry shows Folsom students are 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 on Monday, March 7, masks will be optional at the Folsom school.
- **Grand Isle Elementary School, North Hero School:** Data that our district compiled from the VT Immunization Registry shows Grand Isle and North Hero Campus students are well below 80% vaccinated. 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. The CIUUSD School Board has given the Superintendent the authority to make Covid-19 decisions. As I've indicated in my community letter, we will follow the state guidelines. This means that starting on Monday, March 14, masks will also be optional at all CIUUSD Schools.
- **Alburgh Community Education Center:** Data that our district compiled from the VT Immunization Registry shows students at the Alburgh Community Education Center are well below 80% vaccinated. The Alburgh School Board retained the authority to make decisions related to Covid-19. Throughout the pandemic the Alburgh School Board has followed the guidelines from the state. The Alburgh School Board has their regular meeting scheduled on Monday, March 7, 2022 and this is an agenda item.

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 Monday March 7, 2021, masks will be optional on South Hero buses.
- Masks will continue to be required on all CIUUSD buses until Monday, March 14, at which time it will become optional.
- Masks will continue to be required on Alburgh buses pending a decision from the Alburgh board at its March 7, 2022 meeting.

We Are In This Together!

The State is transitioning from school-specific COVID-19 prevention and mitigation recommendations to general health guidance for all Vermonters. Both the 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 believe it is critical for 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.

.As always we appreciate your support and flexibility. I'm proud to be able to say that the Grand Isle Supervisory Union and all of Grand Isle County has truly embraced the "We are in this together" mantra and I know that will stay true as we continue our transition.