

# *South Lewis Central School District*

**Mr. Douglas Premo, Superintendent**

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Dear South Lewis School Community:

I sincerely hope that everyone has felt the desired relief of the end of the mask mandate in schools. It has been wonderful to see the smiling faces of our students, staff, visitors and entire school community. In addition to the announcement lifting the mask mandate, the NYSDOH has released a guidance document this week outlining both requirements and recommendations to help support the transition.

In regards to masking, there is one situation during which masking is still required. Students, staff, and teachers must wear masks on return to school/work after being diagnosed as COVID+ during days 6-10 of their isolation period. Currently, the date of symptom onset, or the date of the COVID+ test, is identified as Day 0 of the 10-day isolation period. Individuals must isolate through at least Day 5. If after Day 5 the symptoms have dissipated, then the person is able to return to work or school on Day 6. If someone returns to work or school at any time between Days 6-10 of the isolation period, then a mask must be worn. This masking would only be required indoors, including on school transportation. For those required to wear a mask during this time period, it may be removed when eating, drinking, singing, going outside or playing a wind instrument. When removed it is recommended to maintain 6 feet of physical distancing to the extent possible.

It is important to note that local health departments have been given the authority to require masking or implement more restrictive requirements than put forth by the State. However, Lewis County Public Health has no plans to do so at this time.

In addition to this limited masking requirement for those that have been diagnosed as COVID+, many recommendations have been put forth as best practices. While these recommendations are not required, I have listed a few below:

- Masking for 10 days after a known exposure to a COVID+ case
- Testing on Day 5 after a known exposure to a COVID+ case
  - Should anyone want an at-home COVID test kit the school has many available through our school nurses.
- Staying home when ill or symptomatic
- Hygiene etiquette such as washing hands and covering coughs/sneezes

Lastly, it is critical that our school community is fully supportive of those who choose to continue to wear masks. While the elimination of the mask mandate in schools was met with relief for many, it has also brought concern and apprehension for others. These individuals should not be stigmatized, bullied or made to feel uncomfortable. Any such behavior will not be acceptable nor tolerated by the school district.

In closing, I again want to thank our students, staff, families and entire school community for the continued support of the educational process throughout these past two years. Very little about this time has been easy or comfortable. However, our school community continually rose to the occasion and met the challenges. As we move forward to a new phase and hopeful end of the pandemic, we will be prepared to adjust, adapt and remain flexible. Our focus will continue to be the health and safety of our school community and the education of our students.

Sincerely,



Douglas Premo  
Superintendent of Schools