



February 28, 2022

In my February 16th letter, I advised our school communities that FWSU schools would continue to require masks when we returned from February break and that I would provide additional updates shortly thereafter. On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated their guidance around masking, particularly in schools and on school buses. This new guidance has sped up my timeline for providing an updated procedure, but has not changed its ultimate trajectory.

According to the CDC's [COVID-19 Community Level](#) guidance, Franklin County is currently categorized as a Medium Risk region. This assessment correlates with data and projections that I have analyzed regularly throughout the year. As we have followed the guidance from the CDC (in the form of Vermont's AOE guidance), we will adjust our masking expectations to align with this guidance. Beginning on March 2, 2022 in all FWSU schools:

- Masks will be optional in our schools. Students, families, and staff will make the best decision for themselves and their families.
- Students who attend high school (or technical centers) outside FWSU will need to follow the mask expectations at their school.
- We will continue to provide high quality masks and have test kits available in our schools.
- If the Community Level increases to High Risk, we will update our expectations around masking according to the CDC guidance.
- At all levels, people can wear a mask based on personal preference, informed by personal level of risk. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should stay home.

With this change, there may be some anxiety, which is understandable. With continued hygiene and cleaning practices, the availability of testing, and most importantly, staying home when sick, we are confident that our schools are and will remain safe for all students and staff. We will work with our students to help them understand that their decision around masking is their personal choice. They should not feel pressured or apply pressure to others who make a different choice. Their decision may change from day to day or week to week and that is okay. All students should continue to feel safe and supported in our schools.

I am excited to be able to share this information with you as it means that we will be moving into spring under a more typical environment for our students. This change indicates a shift from

pandemic thinking to endemic thinking regarding COVID. COVID's health impact is not over, but current conditions allow us to shift our practices away from systemic mitigation strategies and toward personal responsibility for our health and safety. This transition may be challenging, but I am confident that we will be able to move forward by working together. Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

Sincerely,

JOHN T. TAGUE

John T. Tague
Superintendent
Franklin West Supervisory Union