

PINE PLAINS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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June 8, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

First, I would like to express my appreciation to the parents, students and school staff for your patience during the past four days of chaos and confusion caused by the mixed messages from our leaders in Albany. As I said in a previous letter, in my entire career I have never experienced a more incompetent management of a situation by State Government.

During the first two days of this week, we did not strictly enforce the indoor mask mandate and did not require masks outdoors in the misplaced hope that Albany would follow through on the Friday letter from the State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker.

Yesterday, Governor Cuomo finally spoke to give schools direction on what they need to do. The good news is that he reaffirmed our current procedure in not requiring masks outdoors. Effective immediately, masks are optional for all outdoor activities. Parents who wish to have their students masked outdoors should contact the school office.

The unfortunate action taken by the Governor was he *specifically* required schools to continue the mask mandate indoors. His directive left no room for flexibility. Only students with a medical excuse from a healthcare provider are not required to wear a mask indoors. We will implement this mandate beginning with the start of school tomorrow, Wednesday, June 9th.

Any parent who does not want their student masked indoors will have that student placed in remote instruction for the remainder of the school year. In those cases, the parent should contact the school as soon as possible.

The Governor, as is his typical approach, blamed the schools for not being able to relax the indoor mandate. He said that the schools would not have time to reconfigure the classrooms to accommodate students without masks. That is nonsense. Even if he believed that to be true, he could have made the indoor masks optional. He did not do so.

We will continue our practice of increased mask breaks in both frequency and duration. In addition, we have made supplies of bottled water available to students at their request.

I will also promise to spend whatever time is necessary to advocate for a normal situation when we open school in September.

Again, thank you for working with us during this difficult situation.

Be well and stay safe,

Dr. Martin D. Handler
Superintendent