



## Transition to “Mask Optional” Information Sheet

The information contained in this document is intended to provide some clarification with regard to our transition to “Mask Optional.” The Timberlane Regional School District has continued to rely on the guidance and recommendations of medical professionals at the New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). Over the past two years, guidance has changed as new knowledge about the virus has emerged. We reached the decision to transition to “Mask Optional” based on the continued decrease of county and local data. Moreover, mitigation strategies, including N95 and K95 masks, are widely available, in addition to vaccines, which are available to all staff and students, with the exception of children under age 5.

Please continue to self-screen and keep your child home if they show signs and symptoms of any illness. As always, please contact the school health office to inform the nurse of your child’s absence.

### Relevant Information

On July 11, 2021 Dr. Benjamin Chan, State of NH Epidemiologist, recommended that school districts use the State of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services county data regarding positive cases of COVID-19.

At the August 19, 2021 School Board Meeting, there was significant discussion regarding the use of county data vs. local data. The local, or town data, of cases per 100,000 population was not available or able to be calculated for practical use by school districts until November 30, 2021. At that time, the data for the four towns was calculated at seven times the rate of “Substantial” as far as community transmission.

On August 19, 2021, the Timberlane Regional School District School Board considered the following motion: *“the board to approve the school re-opening plan based on the NH DHHS & NH DOE recommendations as presented on August 11, 2021 with the terms and statements as contained in that document with the understanding that it be reviewed on a daily basis and if the levels change, that will be communicated to parents. The plan will be reviewed on 9/16/2021 at which time all the data available to us, including data from our own school, neighboring schools and communities as well as the county numbers and whether or not that still continues to apply to us or we want to make adjustments will be discussed at that time.”* The motion passed by a vote of 7-2-0.

Since August 23, 2021, following the NH DHHS Rockingham County data, the Timberlane Regional School District has remained in “Substantial” as far as community transmission.

As both local and county data have been dropping at a steady rate, we anticipate that our county-level data will fall out of “Substantial” within the coming weeks. Also, we expect that our schools will be cleared of all clusters and outbreaks at that time.

Please find all COVID-19 daily data at this link <https://www.timberlane.net/trsd-covid-data/>.

***Contact Tracing, State Reporting and Family Notification***

As of February 2, 2022, school districts are no longer required to conduct contact tracing; therefore, families will no longer be notified of their child's exposure to COVID-19 in school. However, we do still ask that you inform the school's health office if your child is COVID positive.

***Isolation and Quarantine Recommendations***

We ask that you demonstrate consideration for other members of our school community as we will continue to use the [Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines](#) released by the NH DHHS in January 2022.

***Masking***

We continue to recognize that medical professionals and organizations such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) continue to recommend the wearing of masks as a mitigation strategy of personal choice.

Please be advised that per the CDC, the wearing of masks is **REQUIRED** while riding school buses until further notice. [https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC\\_GMTF\\_01-29-21-p.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC_GMTF_01-29-21-p.pdf)