

Mill Stream Elementary School

Sticking our necks out for kids!

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March 4, 2022

Good Afternoon Mill Stream Families,

I am reaching out this afternoon to provide information regarding MSAD 54's transition to a masking optional policy at MSES.

On Wednesday March 2, 2022, Superintendent Moody sent out a communication to all district families announcing that MSAD 54 will be transitioning to a "mask optional" policy beginning on March 9th. This policy change will impact masking in the school buildings, as well as on school provided transportation. This decision was made to align with the most recent recommendations from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Department of Education.

During this shift, it will be important to understand that there are many different reasons why someone in our community or school would choose to continue to mask or not to mask. To be specific, individuals that decide to continue to mask may have pre-existing conditions, be unvaccinated, or who otherwise feel vulnerable, making masking a necessity. Conversely, others in our school and community will choose not to mask for various reasons. For example, some will choose to not wear a mask because it may be difficult to breathe, understand speech, or personal preference. Both decisions are reasonable and appropriate and a decision that will be made by each person. We ask that students, staff, and parents are respectful and kind to each other regardless of the decision one makes for themselves regarding this polarizing topic.

Please make time before March 9th, to talk with your children about how important it is to respect and value the decisions of others regarding masking and unmasking. Our children will need our direction and positive role-modeling to know how to handle these situations over the next couple of weeks as we make this transition. Additionally, we will be talking with our students about the importance of being respectful and accepting of each individual's decision on mask wearing at school. We believe that every child has the right to feel safe and supported in school and at the end of the day, they should know that their education is the focus, not their appearance or personal health decisions. Our job as caring adults should be demonstrating that people can disagree about important topics and still be respectful of one another.

Lastly, there may be extremely rare situations in our school where individuals may be asked to mask for the safety and well being of others. There are students and staff in our district that have extremely fragile, documented medical challenges that require others to mask for them to attend school safely. Furthermore, MSES's Pre-K classrooms are federal Head Start programs, therefore students and staff in those programs must continue to wear masks at all times in school.

Thank you in advance for your support and understanding as we shift to a "masking optional" policy in our district. As always, we appreciate all that you do to support your child and our school. Below please note some important dates for your family planning

Thank you,

*Robert Rodrigue Jr.*

Robert P. Rodrigue

Principal Mill Stream Elementary School

### **Upcoming Events**

- 3//4 2nd Trimester Ends
- 3/9 Early Release for students. 11:45 dismissal.
- 3/10 School Board Meeting 7pm SAHS cafeteria.
- 3/14 2nd Trimester Report Cards go home
- 3/18 Teacher Workshop-No School
- 3/24 School Board Meeting 7pm SAHS cafeteria.
- 3/30 Early Release for students. 11:45 dismissal.