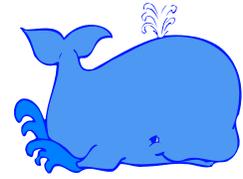


Suffolk Region PTA



Stephanie Gurin
Legislative Chair – Advocacy Team
legislativeadvocacy@suffolkpta.org
516-236-2781 - cell #

FEBRUARY REPORT

Mask Mandate For Schools Will Remain Until At Least Early March

Gov. Kathy Hochul says the state's mask mandate for New York's schools will remain in place for now, even though her administration lifted the mask requirement for indoor businesses and other public places. During her press conference, the governor said the mask mandate for students, staff and visitors will be re-assessed in early March. "We have to be realistic," Hochul said. "This pandemic is still with us."

New York's statewide mandate requiring masks in schools had been scheduled to expire on Feb. 21, the first day of a scheduled weeklong mid-winter break for most public schools. Some school administrators, as well as many parents across New York, were hoping Gov. Hochul would stick to that plan as a step toward returning normalcy to schools roiled by pandemic-related shutdowns, quarantines and heated debates over mask requirements.

Gov Hochul's announcement comes as some neighboring states have either ended universal mask mandates or are moving ahead with plans to ease or eliminate their mask requirements for schools as coronavirus infections plummet in most places. However Gov Hochul, when speaking to education leaders and stakeholders, told participants that the state will make an assessment the first week of March before deciding on whether to eliminate mask requirements for New York schools.

State to Provide COVID Home Tests to K-12 Students

The state will be providing COVID tests to every K-12 student before the mid-winter break and another test when they return to school. Gov. Hochul said parents will be asked to test students right after the break, then again three days later. By early

March the state will make an assessment of its mask protocols based on the latest metrics, including positive cases per 100,000 residents, vaccination rates, pediatric hospitalizations and global trends. The Governors continued goal is to get more students in the 5 to 11 and 12 to 17 age groups fully vaccinated, as well as provide more test kits to school districts

School Board Meetings Can Continue Virtually

Governor Hochul signed Executive Order 11.3, which extends her previous COVID-19 state of emergency declaration through March 16, 2022. Since the Open Meetings Law exception allowing fully virtual board meetings is now linked to the state of emergency status, all meetings for school boards or other boards of trustees may continue to be conducted in a fully virtual manner until at least March 16. As such, boards are free to conduct their public meetings either virtually or in a strictly in-person manner, if they choose to do so.

Fiscal Year 2023 Executive Budget Highlights on School Aid & Foundation Aid

School Aid: The FY 2023 Executive Budget provides \$31.3 billion in total School Aid for SY 2023, the highest level of State aid ever. This investment represents a year-to-year increase of \$2.1 billion (7.1 percent) compared to School Year (SY) 2022, including a \$1.6 billion Foundation Aid increase and a \$466 million increase in all other School Aid programs.

Foundation Aid: Foundation Aid is the State's main education operating aid formula. It is focused on allocating State funds equitably to all school districts, especially high-need districts, based on student need, community wealth, and regional cost differences. The Executive Budget provides a \$1.6 billion (8.1 percent) increase in Foundation Aid, supporting the second year of the three-year phase-in of full funding of the current Foundation Aid formula and ensuring each school district receives a minimum year-to-year increase of 3 percent.

HELPFUL LINKS:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/programs/fy-2023-executive-budget>

<https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy23/ex/book/briefingbook.pdf>

<https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy23/ex/fy23bills.html>