

St. Croix Prep  
Covid Response Team Meeting-Summary  
February 14, 2022 (Updated February 15, 2022)

**Topic: Mask Required/Mask Optional Discussion**

**Guiding Principles:**

- SCPA has a responsibility as a public school to do our best to promote/support public health.
- SCPA has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of our school community.
- SCPA looks toward CDC/MDH in establishment of health protocols. CDC/MDH are the nation's experts – so we are choosing to look to those institutions for mask and contact tracking guidance.

**CDC/MDH Protocol which we are committed to adhering to:**

- Masks required for positive cases days 6-10 (for recommendation 1-3 below).
- Contact tracing (for recommendation 3-below).

**Why remain masked:**

- **The only clear metric available is that CDC/MDH recommends masks REQUIRED when community spread is Substantial or High.** Wash Co. is High.
  - SCPA staff/students reflect the community. If you make masking optional for our entire school community we will most likely have increased spread within our walls. We have high community spread at present.
  - Stillwater's decision was not data/science based, it appears to be a decision based on a short trend, while community spread remains high.
  - Many other high performing MN Metro who we often benchmark against are masked K-12 (\*see footnote below)).
- **Opportunity to be pro-active vs. reactive if there is a spike after Spring break.**
  - Provides 3-4 more weeks of data
  - SCPA has historically seen a spike in Covid-19 activity after a school break.
  - It is complex to reinstate masks. If we have met an un-named threshold to make masks optional what would it take to reinstate masks? The committee did not identify this.
- **SCPA is committed to contact tracing & #1 goal is to keep kids in school**
  - Mandatory mask results in fewer quarantines.
  - If SCPA goes to masks optional the committee questions if the quarantine protocol should be extended from 5 to 10 days so staff does not have to

monitor days 6-10. If SCPA returns to 10-day quarantine this change would result in more student absences.

- **'K-12 Mask mandate' and 'policy continuity' stabilize the learning environment**
  - SCPA has just experienced the most stable attendance in two years this past week. There is a growing sense of normalcy. The administrative team was unanimous on this point.
  - Stress is added to students and staff in switching between masks/no masks.
  - It would add stress to an already depleted staff to enforce day 6-10 mask mandate for positive students in a mask optional environment.
  - SCPA has not contact traced in a K-8 mask optional environment; therefore, the impact of adding 9 grade levels to mask optional is unknown.
  - Students and staff are fatigued and stressed from the impact of contact tracing.
    - Contact tracing is less intensive in a masked school.
    - Student Stress of 'will they be quarantined.'
    - Additional work for staff.

#### **Why Unmask:**

- Mental Health impact masks have on students
- Educational impact of teacher delivering instruction in mask
- Requests from the SCPA community from those who are opposed to mask mandate.
- Those who wish to remain masked can do so.
- SCPA is providing high quality masks to all who request.
- Case rates are decreasing significantly and trending downward; therefore, it is safe to unmask.

## **Topic: Covid Response Team Recommendations**

### **Recommendation #1:**

- Remain K-12 Mask thru March 31 (3 weeks after Spring Break and last day of quarter) if community transmission, student absences and internal case rates continue to trend downward.
- Isolate for positive cases only.
- Returning positive students/staff required to mask days 6-10.
- This is the recommendation of 8 of 11 administrators represented on the Covid Response Team (one was absent) and school nurse.
- **Pros:**
  - Stabilizes SCPA attendance and learning environment by:
    - Providing SCPA additional community spread data before changing course, thus minimizing the risk of needing to flip back to mask mandate..
    - Allowing SCPA to contact trace effectively, per MDH guidance, which minimizes quarantines.
    - Learning from neighboring districts' change in mask policy before changing course, thus minimizing the risk of needing to flip back to mask mandate.
    - Minimizing the risk that student or staff would test COVID positive prior to Spring Break, thus interrupting Spring Break plans.
    - Reduce the number of students who would self-quarantine the week prior to Spring Break to reduce the risk of testing COVID positive before Spring Break.
    - Minimizing the impact of possible post Spring Break Covid spike, including the disruption of switching back to masks.

**Recommendation #2:**

- K-12 Masks thru Feb 18, if community transmission, student absences and internal case rates continue to trend downward.
- Isolate for positive cases only.
- Returning positive students/staff required to mask days 6-10.
- This is the recommendation of 1 administrator.
- **Pros:**
  - Satisfies SCPA community members (staff, families, students) who would choose to unmask at school.

**Recommendation #3:**

- K-12 Masks thru March 4, if community transmission, student absences and internal case rates continue to trend downward.
- Recommended Mask for 14 days if Travel.
- Continue to Contact trace to extent possible until community transmission is substantial or low.
- Returning positive students/staff required to mask days 6-10 .
- This was the recommendation of 1 administrator and 9 of the remaining administrators' close 2<sup>nd</sup> choice (one was absent).
- **Pros:**
  - Stabilizes SCPA attendance and learning environment by:
    - Providing SCPA additional community spread data before changing course.
    - Allowing SCPA to contact trace effectively, per MDH guidance, which minimizes quarantines.
    - Learning from neighboring district's change in mask policy before changing course.
    - Minimizing the risk that student or staff would test COVID positive prior to Spring Break, thus interrupting Spring Break plans.
    - Reduce the number of students who would self-quarantine the week prior to Spring Break to reduce the risk of testing COVID positive before Spring Break.

**NOTE: the recommendations of SCPA Board Members on the committee have not been noted as these will be represented at the board meeting.**

**Note: SCPA's Covid Response Team:**

- Jon Gutierrez- Exec Director/Covid Coordinator
- Candace Westlund- LSN/Covid Coordinator
- Kelly Gutierrez- Exec Director Finance & Operations
- Susan Peterson- Communications Coordinator
- Andrew Sachariason- US Principal
- Amy Kleinboehl- MS Principal
- Joann Karetov- LS Principal
- Peggy Rosell- Special Services Director
- Terri Smith- HR Director
- Marianne Thole- Food Service Director
- Bill Blotske- Facilities Director
- Kristen Denzer- Parent Board Member
- Drew Melendes- Parent Board Member
- Angie Schumacher- Teacher Board Member
- Nicole Donnay- Teacher Board Member
- Sarah Furestenburg- MD - GUEST

**\*Footnote: List of Comparable MN Metro Schools Mask Policy**

**Updated: February 15, 2022**

**Mask Required:**

Blake  
Breck  
Great River  
Hastings  
Hopkins  
Inver Grove Heights  
Eagan/Apple Valley -masking until community spread level less than substantial  
Mahtomedi  
Math and Science academy  
Minneapolis  
Minnehaha Academy  
Mounds View  
Nova Classica  
Saint Paul Academy  
St Paul  
St. Anthony Village  
St. Louis Park  
Wayzata

**Mask Optional:**

Anoka Hennepin Schools  
Edina  
Farmington  
Forest Lake  
Hudson, WI  
South Washington County  
Stillwater  
Centennial  
Lakeville  
Mankato  
Maple Grove \*Optional unless absence level is greater than 6.2% elementary, 4.9% middle, 7.8% high school  
Monticello  
New Life Academy  
Orono  
Parnassus (K-8 school)  
Prior Lake/Savage  
River Grove (Marina on St. Croix) \*Optional with signed waiver  
Sartell - St. Stephen School District  
White Bear Lake \*Optional as long as building absence doesn't exceed 7% for 3 weeks straight

**Transitioning from Required to Optional:**

Wayzata \*2/22  
Edina 2/25  
Eden Prairie 2/17  
North St. Paul, Maplewood, & Oakdale \*3/7

Osseo Area Schools \*2/18

Minnetonka-masking k-8 and temporary for 9-12 till at least end February

Eagle Ridge-masking until cases below 500/100000 per week (anticipates this being within 2 weeks)