



West Irondequoit Central School District

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Supporting Our Children Through Change *For West Irondequoit Families*

Our children are capable of tremendous resilience in the face of change. As we prepare to support them through the shift to a mask-optional school environment, it is important that families feel prepared to make decisions involving their child(ren) and ready to model and provide suggested ways their child(ren) can engage with others on this topic. It is the goal of our district to create safe spaces for all students, reinforcing mutual respect and kindness.

Considerations for Families/Caregivers:

- **Share clearly what your expectations are** around mask-wearing for your child(ren) and why. Teachers and staff are not able to enforce individual mask-wearing expectations of families. It will be important to share the why behind your approach. Consider clear messaging such as:
 - “We feel that you should/should not wear masks right now because...”
 - “We expect that you will follow our expectations because... ” (share data or personal connections and reasoning)
- **Share what other perspectives might be.** Consider:
 - “Some families may choose to still/not wear masks right now because we all have different and unique situations. Some have health concerns or different beliefs and that is all right. We respect everyone’s right to their own decisions.”
 - Share that people may make different choices at different times based on their own unique circumstances. “Your friend may not wear a mask some days but may wear them other days. It is important to respect their personal choice and privacy on this.”
- **Focus on kindness and mutual respect.** Consider:
 - “We all want our community at school to be a place where everyone feels safe and valued.”
 - “Sometimes we may not agree on different topics, but we can always be respectful.”
 - “You can still be friends or work with classmates, even if you disagree about masking right now.”
- It may help to make connections to other medical/health items that **support a safe and functional day for individuals.** Consider:
 - “Some friends wear glasses/braces/hearing aids/etc.”
 - “Like anything else, we don’t make fun of people because of what they are wearing.”

Welcome. Nurture. Inspire.

- It may help to give some **specific language that kids can use**. Consider:
 - “What do we say when someone asks, ‘Why are you wearing a mask?’ or ‘Why aren’t you wearing a mask?’”
 - “My family wants me to/My family told me I don’t need to.”
 - “My family is/is not wearing masks right now.”
 - “It’s a personal decision I/we have made.”
 - “Okay, thanks for understanding.”
 - “I respect your decision, and I hope that you can respect mine.”
- Encourage your child to **talk to a trusted adult at school** if they are experiencing discomfort at school, so that support can be provided and a sense of well-being can be restored.

This is a chance for our community to unite and move forward together. Kindness and respect will bring us through this next transition.