

Masks Are Now Optional At Many Area Schools

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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East Alton Elementary, Wood River-Hartford District, the Alton School District, Edwardsville School District, and Granite City School District now are mask optional. The schools made decisions on Tuesday to drop mask requirements.

The decision comes after the recent Sangamon County judge's decision overturning the Governor Pritzker mask mandate and the Illinois Joint Committee on Administrative Rules voted to reject reintroduce of emergency rules for COVID-19 protocols.

Granite City Superintendent Stephanie Cann made this statement on Tuesday night: "This afternoon action from the Illinois Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) voted 9-0 to reject a reintroduction of emergency rules for COVID-19 protocols in schools which include masking, testing, and exclusion. This Illinois legislative body is independent of the Illinois judicial Appellate Court, from whom we are still awaiting a ruling on the previous court cases involving the Governor's mask mandates.

"Our legal counsel has advised the School Board and me that there is no longer a legal basis to enforce these emergency rules because they were not renewed at the state level. Without a court order or an order from the local health department, Illinois schools cannot require employee vaccinations/testing, student and employee masking, or exclusion of students and employees (positive or close contacts) from school.

"As a result of this state ruling, beginning Wednesday, February 16, 2022, GCSD9 will no longer be enforcing a mask mandate in its schools. We continue to strongly encourage students and staff to mask if they wish, follow CDC guidance, and stay home if they are sick or symptomatic. Our goal is always to keep students and staff in a safe educational environment. More details concerning COVID-19 positive cases will be shared soon.

"It is important to know that federal law still requires masks on buses. The JCAR state ruling does not affect transportation mandates issued at a Federal level. ALL GCSD9 students who ride buses will continue to be required to wear masks. GCSD9 still strongly recommends masks, and we will also continue to provide a safe and healthy environment for students and staff."