



February 25, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

I try to avoid sharing important information late on a Friday afternoon, but two very big announcements happened today, and I hope you will be happy with the news I have to share. The Illinois Supreme Court issued its decision in the Austin, Graves, Hughes, and Allen cases. Also, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance on masking to recommend masking in schools only in areas of high transmission, based on new key metrics.

Therefore, Governor Pritzker has announced the following:

"I'm gratified that the Supreme Court vacated the lower court's restraining order, meaning that if a school mask mandate needs to go into effect in the future, we continue to have that authority.

"I'm also extremely pleased to say that because the CDC has recommended that masks are needed only in areas of high transmission, the State of Illinois will move forward to remove our school mask mandate, effective Monday. We will recommend that all school districts follow CDC guidance and will update our existing guidance in the coming days."

Per the Governor's announcement, masks are optional for all schools and school districts starting Monday, Feb. 28. ISBE will work with the Illinois Department of Public Health to update our guidance documents as soon as possible.

The past two years of leading through a global pandemic have been the most challenging of my career - and I know many of you would say the same. I am deeply grateful for your partnership in keeping our students and educators safe. Thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education
Illinois State Board of Education

