



Dear GSA Families:

In the last two weeks, the Maine DOE has twice updated the guidelines and procedures we are to follow. As you are aware, the number of cases in our community has been growing, here as throughout Maine. I want to give you an update on what this means for GSA.

**1. The DOE's latest guidelines say that schools who practice universal masking do not need to contact trace.** However, while GSA *does* require universal masking, we will continue contact tracing, for two reasons:

- Families may want to know if a student has been a close contact of someone who has tested positive.
- Asymptomatic close contacts can make their own decisions about whether to get tested.

Note: Symptomatic close contacts, of course, *cannot* come to school.

**2. Since you receive our notification emails, you know that GSA is seeing multiple cases daily.** Epidemiologists expect this will continue for some time.

- For most people, symptoms are mild.
- We cannot prevent the Omicron variant from working its way through our community, but we will continue our campus mitigation procedures (wearing masks and physical distancing) which, along with vaccinations and boosters, are the best tools we have to keep the rate slower and steadier, rather than overwhelming.

**3. Our goal is to keep students in school.**

- Even as cases continue to climb, no public health official recommends schools go remote.
- Going remote is unlikely to have any real effect on whether our students and adults get this variant, but it will negatively impact our students' educational and overall experience and development.
- We will only go remote if too many teachers and staff are out sick at once. As long as we have enough teachers and staff to run school, we will continue to have on-campus classes.

**4. Not all students follow our masking policy perfectly at all times, and this has been a concern for some.**

- In fact, all students are wearing masks nearly all the time.
- We will continue to be vigilant about reminding students, but we cannot change the supportive atmosphere on campus for the sake of perfect compliance.

I know these times are uncertain, and anxiety remains high. I am thankful for our community, and the respect and thoughtfulness with which everyone has responded, even those who have disagreed with our practices or decisions.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Tim Seeley  
Head of School