

From: Lauren and Peter McDermott
20 Mortimer Drive, Old Greenwich, CT

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to express our strong opinion that the mask mandate should be lifted in Greenwich Public Schools. Our son, George, started kindergarten at Old Greenwich School in the Fall of 2021. He has a wonderful team of teachers and administrators, and we are surrounded by a supportive group of families, but unfortunately, I believe his academic and social experience in school is hindered by the mask requirement. George is a very friendly, energetic child. He loves engaging with his friends and sometimes gets carried away with the fun and can become too silly or playfully physical, as many 5-year-olds do. He relies on the facial expressions of his peers to know when his behavior is not wanted by another child. Wearing a face covering hinders his ability to read others' feelings and expressions, empathize with others, and self-regulate.

In addition, last year, George's preschool shared concerns about his speech. George was evaluated by a Speech-Language Pathologist from Greenwich Public Schools and worked with the specialist throughout the year. He is now working with the Speech Specialist at OGS every week. We are particularly concerned with George's pronunciation and articulation. It is important for him to see the teacher's mouth when he is learning new words and it is important for others to see his mouth when he is saying new words or words that are difficult for him to say. I have already witnessed other children in George's class making fun of his speech difficulties. Thankfully, George is a resilient child, but we worry about his self-esteem and ego at this delicate, young age.

Lastly, we are concerned that mask use in schools is unsanitary for young children. George wears his cloth mask on a lanyard around his neck. This is to prevent it from falling on the floor or touching different surfaces. I also pack an extra mask in his bag in case the first one gets dirty. He rarely exchanges for the 2nd one, but when I pick him up from school, the mask around his neck is usually completely saturated in saliva. It also often has food stains on it. It is not healthy for him to continue to wear a wet mask over his mouth while he is trying to learn and engage with his teachers and peers.

George received his 2nd Covid vaccination shot on December 13, 2021. He is a healthy child with a strong immune system, fully vaccinated, and he should have the choice whether or not to wear a mask in school. We hope you consider lifting the mask mandate in Greenwich Public Schools and making masks optional for all students and teachers, especially following Governor Lamont's recent lifting of the statewide mandate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Lauren and Peter McDermott