

August 2, 2021

Dear WCSO Families:

This communication is intended to share important health and safety information as we prepare to welcome students back to school for the 2021-22 academic year.

If you recall, we began last school year in a fully remote instructional environment. Our goal at that time was to implement health and safety protocols that would allow us to get students back into schools for in-person instruction. Thanks to everyone's vigilance in following those measures, we were able to transition to a blended learning model and eventually return all students to the classroom to finish out the year.

This year, we plan to welcome everyone to school with as traditional a start to the year as possible. **Our goal will be to keep children in school, receiving in-person instruction, for the entire year while maintaining the health of our students and staff.** Once again, we will need everyone's continued vigilance in following the health and safety measures that are being put in place for the 2021-22 school year.

A few things are different entering this school year than last year. Most notably, individuals aged 12 and above have had the opportunity to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Families interested in having their child fully vaccinated prior to the start of the school year are encouraged to contact their family physician or one of the many vaccine providers in the region. The latest we've heard from national reports is that vaccines for children under 12 may become available in early to midwinter. Details and a vaccine locator are available at <https://www.vaccines.gov>.

Recent legislation hinders the Governor's and Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) ability to issue and enforce health orders. This same legislation also impacts the measures that schools can enact that take into consideration a person's vaccination status. Therefore, ODH is only issuing recommendations for the state's public schools. Portions of this legislation may be rendered obsolete if and when the Food and Drug Administration grants full approval of COVID-19 vaccinations instead of their current emergency use authorization, so we will continue to monitor developments regarding this matter.

Given this background, below is a brief summary of important health and safety measures that we are able to share at this time for the 2021-22 school year. In addition to complying with any local, state and federal orders that may be in place now or enacted in the future, all decisions will be made in accordance with Board Policy 8420.01, which governs district operations during pandemics and epidemics.

### **Masks/face coverings on buses and other district transportation**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requires masks on public transportation, regardless of a person's vaccination status. Given that school vehicles are considered public transportation, we will continue to require students to wear masks while riding district vehicles in order to remain compliant with CDC orders. Please ensure that your child has their mask with them and understands that they are expected to wear it while on district transportation. We will also continue the practice of assigning seats to students and maintaining cleaning protocols for our vehicles.

## **Masks/facial coverings during school**

In a joint statement issued by Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health, both entities strongly recommend schools follow CDC guidance on universal masking policies for students and staff, regardless of their vaccination status. Per the CDC, when COVID-19 case rates in a community are “substantial” (50 cases per 100,000 individuals) or “high” (greater than 100 cases per 100,000 individuals), there is an increased risk of spread in schools.

**As of today, August 2, our county case rates are above the CDC threshold of 50 cases per 100,000 individuals. Therefore, effective this Wednesday, August 4, we will implement universal mask requirements for all students, staff, and persons entering Board-owned facilities.** For classes or activities that take place outdoors, individuals will be permitted to remove their masks while maintaining appropriate physical distancing.

Should local county case rates drop below the CDC’s threshold of 50 cases per 100,000 individuals, then we would consider a strategic, tiered approach to making masks optional at the high school level. However, we will continue to require all students in grades Pre-K through grade 8 to wear a mask, regardless of case rates, until a vaccine is readily available for children younger than 12 years of age. At that time we will revisit the mask requirement for Pre-K through grade 8 students, based upon county case rates.

One important thing we would like everyone to know is that by wearing masks in a school environment, especially indoors, we are able to keep the option of “Modified Quarantine” in place for children and adults. What Modified Quarantine means is that, even if found to be a “close contact” with a confirmed case of COVID-19, students and adults may continue to be at school. This is important because many families struggled last year to find care and supervision when their children were quarantined at home, or while our schools operated under remote instruction.

Modified Quarantine is only an option if those involved during the identified contact period had been wearing their face masks appropriately and at least three feet of physical distance was maintained. Principals and teachers will work with parents/guardians to make appropriate accommodations for a child’s class work in the event the student is required to fully quarantine at home.

## **Physical distancing and barriers**

To the greatest extent possible, we will continue to maintain at least three feet of physical distancing between students in the classroom, during lunch periods, and in other common areas in which students gather. Barriers made from plexiglass or other materials will not be used. However, schools will still have access to these items in the event their future use is required.

## **Lunch**

Students will be able to eat in the cafeteria and other areas designated for their use during meal service. We will continue to have students physically distanced to the greatest extent possible and seated in pods according to seating charts should we need to perform contact tracing. Contingency plans are in place for meal service in the event a school or the entire district needs to transition to remote instruction. All students will [receive free meals](#) this year due to a federal waiver.

## **Special Education**

The district will continue to provide Special Education services this school year according to each child's Individualized Education Plan.

## **Facility cleanliness**

We will continue facility cleaning protocols that were in place last year. Classrooms will continue to have additional cleaning supplies on hand and sanitizer will remain accessible throughout our facilities. Resources shared among students, such as library books, headphones, manipulatives, etc., will continue to be cleaned and sanitized.

## **School health clinics**

School nurses will continue to serve as a primary point of support for any students exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. Students will be cared for in the designated health clinic area(s) and families will be contacted as soon as possible if a child needs to be sent home from school for any reason.

## **Athletics and other extracurricular activities**

We intend to proceed with a full slate of fall sports and extracurriculars for students. Camps/practices are underway and specific health/safety protocols have been communicated to participants and families. During athletic contests and/or public performances involving spectators, at this time masks remain optional for outdoor events but are strongly encouraged for unvaccinated individuals. Physical distancing of six feet between families also will be required for outdoor events/activities. Masks and physical distancing of a minimum three feet will be required for attendees at indoor events.

Per the health department, student participants who are determined to have been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, but who qualify for modified quarantine (are vaccinated and asymptomatic), will be permitted to continue participating in school and athletic/extracurricular activities. Those who are not eligible for modified quarantine will be quarantined for 10 days, but may be moved to modified quarantine with proof of a negative COVID test after the first five days of quarantine. Any changes or additional details regarding spectator/audience requirements will be communicated as they are determined.

## **Monitoring local health data**

Our core team, which is responsible for monitoring the latest health and safety guidance from medical authorities, continues to meet. As our school year proceeds, we will be tracking [CDC county-level data](#) and local health data specific to our district boundaries through the [COVID-19 Analytics and Targeted Surveillance](#) (CATS) system. We will also monitor school-by-school attendance rates, confirmed COVID-19 case rates, and quarantine rates. This information will be used to determine what health and safety measures should be enacted, such as a requiring masks/facial coverings, transitioning to a blended or remote instructional model, etc. As mentioned before, one of the local benchmarks we will follow closely comes from the CDC and entails community case rates that increase the risk of transmission in schools.

## When to keep your child home (UPDATED 8.17.21)

Students should stay home from school or school activities, or they may be sent home, based upon their health and the health of others. Here are two important documents that we would like to share with families. One has information about [monitoring your children's health](#) each day and the other is about the [quarantine procedures](#) that we will be following.

### Moving Forward Together

Please know that current and future decisions remain subject to change based upon new developments and information that becomes available. Our district and school leadership, as well as other school staff, will continue to communicate to families any health/safety information that is specific to their instructional program(s) and learning community. At the district level, we will continue to consult with our local health officials and monitor the data that inform our decision-making process. We will follow all applicable quarantine and communication requirements when any confirmed cases of COVID-19 become known.

Prior to the pandemic, our schools regularly provided accommodations for medically fragile students and/or students who need additional instructional support due to their confirmed health conditions. We will continue this practice and provide additional support to those students whose health conditions create a need for these accommodations, particularly if their condition would be further compromised by COVID-19. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact your building principal.

In the event of increased health concerns, contingency plans remain in place to put individual schools or the entire district in remote learning. This would allow us to continue teaching and learning while slowing the spread of the virus. If we ever transition to a different instructional model, we would plan to remain in that new model for at least 10 school days.

Once again, our goal is to keep children in school, receiving in-person instruction, for the entire year while maintaining the health of our students and staff. How our learning community responds to these health/safety protocols and the latest information from reputable medical authorities will impact our ability to maintain conditions that allow us to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J R Kellogg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. John R. Kellogg  
Superintendent