

# NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



2309 Locust Street S, Canal Fulton, OH 44614 P: (330) 854-2291 F: (330) 854-3591 [www.northwest.sparcc.org](http://www.northwest.sparcc.org)

August 31, 2021

To All in the Northwest Community:

As many of you know, all of us have worked very hard to maintain a sense of normalcy with the start of the school year. We have been thrilled with our start in seeing our teachers back in the classroom with our students.

Even with our excellent start to the school year, we have experienced constant obstacles that refuse to subside. Of course, this is regarding COVID. We started the school year with masks being recommended and not required for students and staff. I believe this was the correct decision at the time.

This past Sunday, I spent the afternoon with Stinson's principal, her administrative assistant, and several teachers contacting over 70 parents to quarantine their children. This number totaled more than the number quarantined at Stinson for the entire school year last year. As of today, our numbers continue to rise and rise without any indication of slowing down. At this moment, 13 days into the new school year, we have 5 confirmed diagnosed staff members with 4 waiting on testing results. We also have 8 confirmed diagnosed cases among our student population.

We have continued to monitor the situation daily – sometimes hourly. Our ultimate goal is to provide the best educational experience possible while doing our best to protect our students, faculty and staff. We believe that in order for us to keep everyone as safe as possible, we must implement a school-wide mask policy.

Here are the steps to implementing masks throughout the Northwest School District:

- All faculty and staff are required to wear masks immediately beginning **Wednesday, September 1** while in school, on school buses, or with any interaction with other people.
- Students from Kindergarten through the 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be required to wear masks beginning on **Tuesday, September 7**. This will include masks worn indoors on school grounds and on school buses to and from school.

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- Students from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade will also be required to wear masks unless a parent signs off on an “Opt Out” form submitted to the Main Office at Northwest High School or Northwest Middle School. This form must be signed and turned into the Main Office by the beginning of the school day on **Tuesday, September 7**. For students who do not turn in the “Opt Out” form, they are required to wear masks on **Tuesday, September 7**. Some may ask, “Why are students at the High School and Middle School given permission to opt out?” The answer is this: Students at the High School and Middle School can be vaccinated. Our younger students cannot be vaccinated; therefore, we are requiring our younger students to wear masks until our current situation improves. **Remember, if a student opts out and we conduct contact tracing, that student may risk quarantining if identified as a close contact person. In other words, the child risks missing a lot of school without wearing a mask.**
- All students will be required to wear masks on school buses to and from school. Masks must also be worn when traveling on buses due to extra-curricular events.
- For extra-curricular events, as of right now, masks will remain recommended and not required.

Along with the mask rule, we will continue to follow the existing guidelines to maintain a safe school district for our children. This means that we will maintain the COVID protocols such as appropriate social distancing with a minimum of three feet whenever possible. We will also continue to sanitize classrooms, cafeterias, and other work areas. Teachers will also remind our children to wash their hands frequently.

We will also continue to evaluate our situation. Should the numbers of those diagnosed and those quarantined improve, then we would take the steps to eliminate masks. We will continue to do whatever is necessary to keep our students safe.

Our situation remains fluid. When changes occur, we will continue to do our best to notify the Northwest Community. These are uncommon times but I feel like as long as we do what is best for the safety of our children and our faculty and staff, we will have a successful school year.

Thank you for your support!

Shawn Braman