

NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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

New Northwest Local Mask Guidelines

10.28.21

Mask to Stay/ Test to Play

Hello To All In The Northwest Community:

We recently received new guidelines from the Ohio Department of Health concerning COVID, quarantines, and wearing masks. For the Northwest Community, we will still maintain our mask policy from K – 12. Along with that, we will also continue our “Opt – Out” policy for all of our students K – 12. Our faculty and staff will continue to wear masks to ensure their health. Please read through the following message from the Ohio Department of Health for our changes in dealing with quarantines:

Quarantining students at home who have been exposed to COVID-19 in a school environment has the unintended consequence of reducing in-school learning and can be an added strain on parents, schools, and local health departments (LHDs). While ***vaccination and mask usage*** are critical components to ensuring a safe school environment, we offer an in-school alternative to quarantining students and school staff at home who have been exposed to COVID-19 in a school environment to support in-school learning and reduce the strain. This recommendation is informed by a growing body of national experience, a pilot in Warren County, and experience shared by other LHDs that points toward a low number of individuals with direct contact to a COVID-19 positive individual within a school setting who convert to positive cases. Based on this information and the success of the Warren County pilot, we recommend the following for K-12 students and staff exposed to COVID-19 in a school setting.

Please note: Eligibility to participate in mask to stay/test to play is contingent on the exposure being in the school setting or school-related activities. This does not apply to household exposures or exposures outside of the school setting or school-related activities.

Mask to Stay

Direct contacts, regardless of vaccination or masking status, may remain in the classroom environment if they do the following: •

- Wear a mask for 14 days after their last date of in-school or in-school related activities exposure.
- Self-monitor, or parent-monitor, for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Isolate and get tested if they start to experience symptoms associated with COVID-19 (regardless of level of severity).
- Consistent with guidance for others quarantining in lower-risk environments, students and staff may discontinue these quarantine procedures after seven days — if they don't develop symptoms and test negative between days 5-7.

NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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

Direct contacts for COVID-19 are those individuals who are identified as being *directly exposed* to COVID-19 by the positive case. Remember, COVID-19 is a respiratory virus and does not require physical contact to spread. It is spread through sneezing, coughing, talking, and breathing. These factors should be considered when determining level of exposure and direct contacts. ***Best practice for distancing is 3 ft with everyone masked, 6 ft if the individual is not masked.***

Parents and students are responsible for their own symptom monitoring; however, if nurses/school staff see a child exhibiting symptoms they should act accordingly.

Test to Play

Asymptomatic contacts may continue to participate in extracurricular activities if they do the following:

- Wear a mask when able. (This includes: transportation; locker rooms; sitting/standing on the sidelines; and anytime the mask will not interfere with breathing, the activity, or create a safety hazard.)
- Test on initial notification of exposure to COVID-19.
- Test again on days 5-7. If they are negative at this time, they will test out of quarantine.

Please Note: The tests referenced above are SARS-CoV-2 viral (PCR or antigen) tests. They should be proctored/observed by someone and cannot be an over the counter, at home test that was self-administered without a proctor.

Students may consider same day testing for athletic competitions where there is the potential of school to school exposure. If students involved become positive for COVID, contact tracing will not occur; instead, our Athletic Department will mail a general letter to notify the other team of the potential for exposure.

These proposed changes incorporate mask wearing and testing to reduce the chance of spread of COVID-19 within structured school settings and provides a safe alternative to quarantine.

In conclusion, just to be clear, we are offering a way for all of our students to avoid being quarantined. Based on that, understand the following:

- As a reminder, due to House Bill 244, vaccine status has no bearing at all on quarantining.
- If you have opted-out of your child wearing a mask, this ***Mask to Stay*** guideline pertains to your child as well. If identified as a close contact person, your child can remain in school by wearing a mask for 14 consecutive days and by remaining asymptomatic. This goes for all children, vaccinated or unvaccinated.

NORTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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

- If the student refuses to wear a mask after being identified as a close contact person, then that child would be quarantined for ten days. This ***Mask to Stay*** plan enables us to keep many more of our students in school and face to face with their teachers.
- Remember: students may discontinue these quarantine procedures after seven days — if they don't develop symptoms and test negative between days 5-7. In other words, a person who can confirm through a proctored COVID test that he or she is negative, that person no longer must wear a mask or quarantine.
- These new guidelines will begin on Monday, November 1, 2021.

As a final reminder, we are maintaining our mask policy for all students K – 12 to continue to wear masks. We are also maintaining our “Opt – Out” policy for any students who do not wear masks for whatever reason. Understand that even if one opts out, that student will still have to wear a mask when identified as a close contact or be quarantined to stay home. These new guidelines allow our students to remain in school even when exposed to the virus.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, email me or call me at 330-573-9024.

Thank you-

Shawn M. Braman Ed.D