

The NYSDOH and Steuben County Health Department have provided us with new guidance regarding Health and Safety in a school setting (as this differs slightly from general settings). This guidance aligns well with the CDC revisions from last week, but is a big change from what we have been doing. We will follow the new guidelines, but we reserve the right as a school to exercise abundant caution to best protect our staff, our students, and our families. We are tied to one another and will protect one another to the best of our ability.

1) Contact Tracing at School:

- a. NYSDOH/VCC will be taking over the tracing process with families moving forward.
- b. School personnel will no longer be involved in the day-to-day process of contact tracing. However as an added precaution, we will notify classroom families of any positive cases that we are aware of as we have been doing so that you may monitor your child for possible symptoms.

2) Quarantine Orders:

- a. All quarantine orders will be written for 5 days.
- b. For positive cases, you can return at the end of that quarantine IF you do not have a fever or persisting symptoms for 48 hours or more. The day your symptoms start is Day 0. The next day would be Day 1 and you will quarantine through Day 5. However, if you have any symptoms on Day 5, continue to quarantine until you are fever free without medication and other symptoms are lessening for 48 hours. If you have fever or persisting symptoms on Day 4, but not Day 5, we ask that you wait 48 hours after fever is gone without medication and symptoms are lessening to return to school.
- c. For asymptomatic positive cases: If symptoms develop after testing positive, the 5-day isolation period should start over. Day 0 is the first day of symptoms. Follow the recommendations above for ending isolation for people who had COVID-19 and had symptoms.

3) Self-Reporting:

- a. Staff and families will have to self-report their positives to their respective County Health Department and/or to the NYSDOH website links. We are really counting on everyone to have integrity and self-report.
- b. At-home positive test results will go to the webpage link for the health department of their county of residence.
- c. All others will go through the NYSDOH website link (once it is active).
- d. The school will report positive results for students and staff who have tested at school.

4) Direct Contacts

a. All fully vaccinated individuals (students, teachers, and staff), who have been exposed to an individual with COVID-19 may continue to attend or work at school, regardless of booster status. They will be required to wear masks completely inside and outside of school for 10 days following exposure.

b. Unvaccinated direct contacts can choose to Test To Stay (if exposed at school, not home) or quarantine for the 5 day order. If the unvaccinated student or staff member is symptom free, they can return to school at the end of quarantine. The day of exposure* is Day 0, so if you are exposed on January 1st, you must quarantine through January 6th, and may return to school on January 7th.

*If the positive case is in the home, it is vital for them to isolate away from the rest of the family so that the “day of exposure” is accurate and students aren’t continuing to be exposed. If isolation is not possible, the 5 days of quarantine will begin once the positive case’s quarantine period is complete.

What does this mean for a student who has symptoms in school?

We will be going back to our rules for illness in school from last year:

If a student comes to the office with any symptoms that are Covid-related, they will either be tested (with parent permission) or will be sent home. Parents, if your child is sent home sick, they need to either have doctor’s permission to return to school, or quarantine for 5 days and not return to school until they are symptom free for a minimum of 48 hours.

Please either return the attached permission to test form, or reply to this email giving permission if you are unable to do that.

I know that some of these changes will cause confusion and frustration this week as we all learn what the guidance will mean in practice, but I also know that we have and will continue to do everything we can to keep our students and staff in school and safe while following the guidance provided to us. We have worked together for the last year and a half to keep our school open and our students learning in person, and we want that to continue. This is a huge divergence from what we have been doing, so this will only work if we all choose honesty and kindness. I am thanking you all in advance for choosing consideration over convenience.

Please let me know if you have any questions.