

11/2/21

Dear WCSC Families:

WCSC will begin operating under a mask-optional policy in all schools and for all extracurricular events, beginning Monday, November 8th, for all students and staff. After careful consideration and planning, we believe we can operate our schools safely in a mask-optional environment. As I stated in my message last Friday, Warrick County's health metrics continue to show a consistent decline in the number of cases, as well as a steady drop in the positivity rate. As of today, Warrick County continues to have a two-metric score of 1.0 with a positivity rate of under 6%. Additionally, our in-school data show that we are averaging less than one case per school across the entire corporation.

To make our mask-optional plan work effectively, we are implementing a series of "circuit breakers" to ensure that if positive case numbers shift and move rapidly in the wrong direction, we are able to respond swiftly. Here are some of the important features of the mask-optional model that we will begin to follow on Monday, November 8th:

- Any student riding a WCSC school bus must wear a mask on the bus at all times. The USDOT (United States Department of Transportation) continues to have this rule in place and our students and drivers will comply. We will be prepared to provide masks for any student who requests one.
- Masks are still recommended as an additional layer of protection for students and staff. We support students, staff, and families who still want to wear a mask in their school environment.
- Per Governor Holcomb's executive orders, we will follow IDOH (Indiana Department of Health) guidelines on determining close contacts and quarantines. More specifically, only students who have been vaccinated or who have had COVID19 in the past 90 days will be allowed to remain in school if they are deemed to be close contacts. According to the executive order, we will also begin contact tracing students at six feet on Monday due to the mask-optional environment.
- If the number of students and staff testing positive reaches 2% of the total student and staff population of that school, the school will be asked to take additional precautions, which will likely include a temporary return to a mask-required environment. Schools will report their information at the end of the day each Thursday. Principals will communicate with families if their school is being asked to take extra precautions.
- If the number of students and staff in quarantine reaches 7-10% of the total student and staff population, we will initiate a discussion with the building administration to determine if patterns and numbers dictate that extra precautions need to be taken. Excessive quarantining puts stress on families, teachers, and the learning environment. We must be conscious of this as we move forward.
- If Warrick County's two-metric score accelerates quickly and begins approaching the 3.0/Red range, district administrators and principals will determine if extra precautions are needed.

- All WCSC schools have implemented rapid/BinaxNow testing in order to reduce quarantine length for close contacted students. Starting November 8th, we will also test symptomatic students. These testing measures will support our efforts to minimize quarantine time and to keep our students in school. Please check with your school for more details on scheduling rapid/BinaxNow testing.

Our leaders are committed to continuing to operate our schools in a safe manner and to keeping our doors open. We know that our students learn best when they are with their teachers and support staff each day, so we will follow our guidelines consistently. We will continue to share both our case and quarantine information on our webpage, and we will also make the necessary changes to our displays so that you have the information on our updated measures. Additionally, you should be on the lookout for any school-specific information from your child's principal and teachers.

Thank you.

Todd Lambert