



LICKING HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS

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September 2, 2021

RE: COVID-19 Update

Dear Families:

We are within the third week of this new school year and I appreciate your efforts to help safely open the school district five days per week.

I am writing to provide an update about COVID-19 data within our school district. The following is a breakdown of our district data as of September 2, 2021. This data is updated weekly and can be found on the district's website by using the following link [COVID dashboard](#).

LH COVID-19 Data

Building Name	Positive Student	Positive Staff	Close Contact Students Quarantined & Building % or District	Close Contact Staff Quarantined
High School 1,341 students	3 <1%	0	13 <1%	0
Middle School 717 students	13 <2%	2	67 <10%	0
Central 758 students	5 <1%	0	42 <6%	0
South 749 students	4 <1%	1	5 <1%	0
West 845 students	4 <1%	0	11 <2%	1
North 430 K students	3 <1%	0	11 <3%	0
Total 4,830 students	32 <1%	3	149 3%	1

Active Positive Districtwide: 35

Close Contacts: 150

Specific to this information, I want to highlight the data above is largely self-reported from our families for their children. This is an important distinction because published public health department data from one of our three health departments (Columbus, Franklin County or Licking County) may differ from our locally collected data. Additionally, I want to thank our families for sharing such information because it helps district staff with COVID-19 tracking.

As the data is analyzed, the number of positive COVID-19 cases is rising in our school district and a significant amount of the infection is reportedly from outside of the schools; however, the number of students in quarantine is rising at a fast rate. One of the most frequent questions we receive is how to minimize the number of quarantines?

On August 31, 2021, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) rereleased their school guidance and tried to provide more clear and precise information, especially regarding quarantines. That guidance [from the Ohio Department of](#)

[Health](#) also addresses when students or staff are exposed to the virus and who should be quarantined. The following is an excerpt and contains personal mitigation strategies to lessen the likelihood of quarantine:

- Get vaccinated, if you are eligible
- Wear a mask while indoors
- To the greatest extent possible, maintain three feet of distance, six feet being best practice

The following is also from the ODH school guidance and summarizes that quarantine is NOT required if the direct contact has no symptoms and any of the following criteria are met:

- The direct contact is fully vaccinated, **OR**
- The school requires masks, maintains physical distance of 3 feet or more, and has documented COVID-19 prevention plans in place, **OR**
- In schools that do not have mask requirements, the direct contact was wearing a mask and maintained physical distance of 3 feet or more.

As a school district, we continue to implement layered preventions to enhance the safety of our staff and students. Also, we have maintained: *Masks are strongly recommended for staff and students for all school functions, but are not required except on school buses.*

Recently, questions have been posed about universal masking in the school district. In response, this is currently being considered and the future of universal masking is largely dependent upon COVID-19 data within our school district. More specifically, if positive case counts continue to rise and quarantines also continue to rise at a fast rate, universal masking may be implemented at some or all grade levels.

I realize the preceding can be controversial, but it is not meant to be. Our objective is to keep the school district open for in-person instruction five days per week this school year.


The overall message is we need to follow the layered preventions to keep staff and students safe, but to also keep our schools open for in-person instruction. For example, mask compliance on our school buses is becoming more challenging for our school bus drivers and extending the length of school bus routes. In addition to the federal requirement, unmasked students sitting near one another on a school bus will unnecessarily lead to more students being quarantined and further disruption to their education. Additionally, it would be appreciated if parents who choose masking for their child(ren) provide reminders about proper mask wearing that covers their entire nose and mouth. Our staff, especially teachers, are providing such reminders and reinforcement from the home will help with consistency.

Attached is an updated copy of our 2021/2022 COVID-19 General Procedures. This infographic provides additional information about district operations, including some of our layered preventions and quarantine guidance. We ask that you help us follow these layered preventions to enhance the safety of our staff and students.

Finally, we have numerous open employment positions within the school district, including school bus drivers. Please click the following link to access a listing of our [job postings](#).

I will continue to provide relevant updates as they become available.

Sincerely,



Philip H. Wagner, Ph.D.
Superintendent