



LICKING HEIGHTS LOCAL SCHOOLS

6539 Summit Rd. SW, Pataskala, OH 43062

p. (740) 927-6926 | f. (740) 927-9043

January 7, 2022

Dear Families:

The Licking Heights Board of Education has set a universal masking policy for all district students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, within Licking Heights School buildings. Universal masking takes effect on Monday, January 10, 2022.

This change comes as active cases among district students and staff show significant increases according to data released by the Licking County Board of Health and other health agencies with whom we work.

Although spread of the infection within the school district has thus far been minimal, the number of COVID-19 positive cases contracted outside of the school district have significantly increased. We started the week with 14 student and 6 staff positive COVID-19 cases. As of last night, there are 73 student and 26 staff COVID-19 positive cases. As expected, absenteeism among students and staff is significantly increasing with positive case counts.

Analysis of our community data within the school district shows some of the highest rates of community spread in Central Ohio. Our goal is to keep in-person school open 5 days a week. Universal masking is expected to help control spread and transmission, as well as, to assist in the process of contact tracing.

Although it is not possible to predict upcoming public health conditions, the school district's position on universal masking is expected to be discontinued once COVID-19 case counts significantly decrease.

Licking County Health Commissioner, Chad Brown, was present for the January 6 Special Board Meeting. The health commissioner told board members, the next three weeks will be pivotal and will pose "a rough period," ahead of an expected easing of virus infection and transmission rates. Commissioner Brown also told our board members, "Our goal since the beginning of the pandemic has been to keep the schools open and in-person, and that's what we're going to continue to do."

After a mild flu season in 2020-21, this year flu rates are also sharply rising, further threatening operational stability for our district at a time when staff, bus driver and substitute teacher shortages have caused building closures and transportation disruptions in school districts across the nation.

Under the universal masking policy **anyone in the school buildings will need to be masked**, including spectators at extracurricular and athletic events. Exceptions resulting from health and other potential exemption conditions are spelled out in the board policy. Additionally, Federal orders continue to require masks on all school buses. Finally, masks must be compliant with the CDC Guidelines - Masking Guidelines from the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

I will continue to provide relevant updates as they become available. Finally, the following pages contain additional health guidance.

Sincerely,

Philip Wagner, Ph.D.



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Superintendent

Health Officials Update

A reminder that our health departments are actively working with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to continue to provide updated guidance for school districts. As such, the following are recommended actions to take based on specific scenarios in alignment with the updates published by the CDC:

Students/Employees Who Have Tested Positive and Are Asymptomatic

Action To Take:

- Isolate at home for five days.
- Mask for five days after the isolation period.

Students/Employees Who Have Tested Positive and Have Symptoms

Action To Take:

- Isolate at home for five days.
- If the student/employee has a fever, the student/employee must remain isolated until fever free for at least 24 hours without fever reducing medications even if greater than the required five days of isolation.
- Mask for five days after the isolation period.

Students/Employees Who Are Exposed to COVID-19 and Have Received Their Booster and Are Asymptomatic

Action To Take:

- No required quarantine.
- Wear a mask for 10 days.
- Test, if possible, five days after exposure as a best practice.

Students/Employees Who Are Exposed to COVID-19 and Completed Vaccination Series (Pfizer or Moderna) Within the Last Six Months or Received J&J Vaccine Within the Last Two Months and Are Asymptomatic

Action To Take:

- No required quarantine.
- Wear a mask for 10 days.
- Test, if possible, five days after exposure as a best practice.

Students/Employees Who Are Exposed To COVID-19 and Are Unvaccinated or Completed Vaccination (Pfizer or Moderna) More Than Six Months Ago or Received J&J Vaccine More Than Two Months Ago

Action To Take:

- Stay home for five days.



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- Mask for five days after quarantine.
- Test, if possible, five days after exposure as a best practice.

Students Who Are Exposed to COVID-19 and Are Between the Ages 12 -15 Who Completed Vaccination Series But Are Not Booster Eligible Are Considered Fully Vaccinated

Action To Take:

- No required quarantine.
- Wear a mask for 10 days.
- Test, if possible, five days after exposure as a best practice.

Athletics

The athletic departments will continue to communicate directly with student athletes and their coaches regarding the updated health and safety protocols as necessary.