



Return to School - Update

Laker Parents,

As I cautioned in my August 4th email, our review of COVID data is ongoing and our guidelines will remain fluid.

Our experience last year transitioned from an obsession with mitigation strategies designed to keep students, staff and community members safe to an obsession with doing the same while maintaining in-person learning. The constant disruption of quarantines was perhaps the hardest element for staff to manage last year.

As we approach this school year, the focus of the Board is unchanged: provide safe, continuous in-person learning. To that end, we have considered the following factors:

1. Case and positivity rates within Ottawa County have moved from Moderate a week ago to Substantial to begin this week to High as I prepare this message. We view the CDC thresholds as an early warning system and the current status is signaling that the potential for growth in cases is significant. As with any warning system, the science is not perfect. Case rates may have already leveled off. A sustained decline in case rates and movement back to Substantial or Moderate will signal that mitigation strategies can begin to be incrementally lifted.
2. The CDC, OCDPH, MDHHS, and American Academy of Pediatrics currently recommend universal indoor masking for K-12 students and staff.
3. Vaccination levels continue to rise for our eligible school aged population but a significant portion of our students are not eligible for vaccination.
4. Transmission within SLPS classrooms was very low last year while our primary mitigation strategy was the universal wearing of masks.

I have attached our updated guidelines for your review. Effective August 17, 2021 masks will be required when indoors for all students and staff during the school day, with the exception of when students are eating lunch. As was the case last year, mask breaks will be provided and masks will not be required while students are outdoors. The requirement for masks on school buses continues.

At this time masks will not be required to be worn by middle school or high school student-athletes during the time they are practicing or competing, whether indoors or out.

Finally, whether we agree or disagree about these changes, know that we love your children and look forward to having them back to school on August 24th. This is going to be a great school year!

Regards,

Dennis M. Furton, Superintendent