



August 8, 2021

Greetings Lebanon Warriors,

We are excited to welcome staff and students back to our buildings next week. Our staff has been busy this summer ensuring students are welcomed back to clean, safe, and engaging classrooms. Lebanon City Schools has excellent summer staff members who have worked tirelessly to prepare our buildings, grounds, and buses. We cannot wait for the reopening of our schools next week!

Over the past two weeks we have received emails and correspondence from parents and community members with questions and comments about our return to school plans. While we have been unable to respond individually to all emails, we have created this correspondence to address the most common questions.

Results from Parent Surveys:

Over the past month, we have sought input from our community on two separate occasions. The topic of masks came up many times during the ThoughtExchange and the input was very polarizing. Approximately 20% of the participants expressed a strong desire for parent choice and optional or no masking. 16% of the participants supported a universal mask mandate for all staff and students. Remaining participants did not weigh in on masks in the exchange. Results from our K-6 parent survey on the masked classroom option followed a similar pattern. 25% of all respondents stated they did not want a masked classroom, 6% requested a masked classroom, and 14% requested a masked classroom but only if their child's teacher remained the same. Again, 55% did not participate in the survey. These results clearly show that our community is divided on the topic of masks. We will continue to seek input from caregivers; however, we will not make decisions solely based on parent input or opinions, but also in consultation with local health officials as we monitor our school and community data.

Collaborating with Warren County Health Officials:

As we have prepared for the school year, we have regularly communicated with the Warren County Health District (WCHD) and Warren County school leaders. As a result of those discussions, Warren County Schools released a [joint statement](#) this week regarding health and safety protocols. The [guidelines from WCHD](#) have continued to evolve this week as school guidelines have been issued from ODH. We will continue to work collaboratively with WCHD to regularly monitor the spread of COVID in our facilities and will adjust our plans accordingly.

District Mask Policy:

Every Warren County school district has adopted the WCHD and CDC position that universal masking is a recommendation. We will strongly encourage the use of masks by all staff and students in our facilities, but will not require masks inside of our facilities at this point in time. Please note there is an active CDC Order mandating masks on school buses. We have been advised by legal counsel that this federal mandate clearly applies to school buses and we must adhere to the order.

Health and Safety Protocols:

The following social distancing protocols will remain in place this school year:

- Our facilities will continue to have hand sanitizer stations available in common areas and we will regularly provide opportunities for proper hand washing.
- We will continue to provide water filling stations in place of water fountains. Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles to school to refill throughout the day.
- Restroom facilities will be sanitized once midday and will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected each evening.
- Classroom desks and high-touch surfaces will be sanitized once during the school day.
- Our classroom teachers will make every effort to ensure student desks are at least 3 feet apart.
 - Students will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with each other in the classroom and those interactions will be within 3 feet of each other.
 - We have encouraged staff to make an effort to keep those collaborative opportunities to less than 15 minutes, if possible.
- Each building will have expanded seating locations or lunch periods in order to spread students out during lunchtime.
- The district will provide a contact tracing point of contact to assist with communication and reporting to WCHD.
 - Caregivers will be notified when a positive case is identified in their child's classroom or on their bus.

Contact Tracing, Isolation, and Quarantine Requirements:

We are required to report positive cases of COVID to WCHD and work with them to contact trace to identify individuals who were in close contact with the positive individual. When necessary, staff and students may be required to isolate or quarantine as a result of a positive case. Due to the fact masks are strongly recommended and not all students will be wearing masks, when a positive case is identified we will use these documents from the WCHD and the ODH to establish quarantine guidelines for students:

- [Who Needs to Quarantine? \(WCHD\)](#)
- [Quarantine Guidelines for After Exposure \(ODE\)](#)
- [Quarantine Guidelines for After Exposure Flowchart \(ODE\)](#)
- [Quarantine Options After Close Contact \(WCHD\)](#)

The following is provided to clarify the detailed documents linked above:

- If ALL 3 of the following guidelines ARE met then no one will be required to quarantine:
 - Masks were worn by both the COVID positive individual and the close contact,
 - 3 feet of physical distancing was maintained, AND
 - Prevention strategies were implemented: handwashing, cleaning, proper ventilation, etc...

- If ALL 3 of the above guidelines are NOT met, then the following rules will apply:
 - Vaccinated individuals who are identified as a close contact will not be required to quarantine.
 - They are encouraged to mask for 14 days and monitor for symptoms or have a negative test at least 5 days after exposure.
 - Unvaccinated individuals, who were wearing a mask AND maintained 3 feet of distance, will not be required to quarantine even if the positive individual was unmasked.
 - They are encouraged to mask for 14 days and monitor for symptoms or have a negative test at least 5 days after exposure

While vaccines and masks are not required for staff or students, please understand that the guidance released from WCHD and ODE clearly states that unmasked and unvaccinated individuals will be subject to quarantines if they are in close contact with COVID. We would encourage you to clearly communicate with your child that there are times where masking may be more beneficial or necessary. Based on the guidance outlined above, we strongly encourage the use of masks during group activities where 3 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained. However, with an optional mask policy, masks may not be necessary when they are sitting alone at their desks and not in close contact with other individuals.

School and Family Partnership:

As we prepare for the school year, we ask that you have honest discussions with your child about what to expect when they return. In a mixed mask environment, there will be some who are most comfortable masking at all times and others who will choose to never wear a mask. We cannot possibly understand everyone's experiences or comfort level with attending school but we must all commit to being respectful of each other. As a district, we will work to create safe and inclusive environments where we support all children, regardless of this personal decision. We will not tolerate bullying comments or behavior. Please communicate with your child's teacher or principal if they are experiencing these behaviors at school.

We have so much to be excited about this school year and we want to focus on building community around what unites us.

Onward Lebanon,

Isaac W. Seevers, Superintendent