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# Lyle School District

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March 10, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

You've probably heard that the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has released new guidance for schools, child care, and other youth activities.

The big news is that wearing a mask indoors is no longer required– but there are other changes in what schools must do. This guidance reflects the state's continued COVID-19 recovery efforts and a new phase of the pandemic.

**Here is a summary of some of the major changes.** It will take some time for our school district to review the new guidelines in detail and make adjustments to all of our practices. We ask for your patience and promise to share information with you as quickly as possible.

- **Remember, the new guidance does not go into effect until Saturday, March 12, 2022. Because the 12<sup>th</sup> is a Saturday, it will not affect our students in Lyle until Monday, March 14.** Until then, we must continue to follow current guidance.
- Many of the COVID prevention measures we have used to successfully avoid a major outbreak will now be optional instead of required. **This includes things like general masking and physical distancing.** Schools and organizations are allowed to implement more robust prevention measures, if necessary.
  - **At Lyle School District, we will not be requiring students or staff to wear masks in the school building or on school buses starting on March 14.**
  - **However, anyone who still wants to wear a mask may do so.** We must all be respectful of differences in individual choice when it comes to people using enhanced prevention measures like masking.
- **However, if a student or staff person has symptoms of COVID or another contagious disease, stronger measures will kick in:**
  - **People who have COVID symptoms must continue to stay home and away from others. Testing -- which we will continue to provide -- is strongly recommended. This applies whether someone is vaccinated or not.**
  - **Those who test positive should continue to stay away from others for at least 5 days. To come back on day six:**
    - Symptoms must have improved and their temperature has been normal for at least 24 hours without medication;
    - They must test negative with an antigen test or wear a mask at school and on the bus through day 10.
    - **A person who does not want to get tested or wear a mask must continue to isolate at home for 10 full days.**
    - Regardless of the results of a COVID test, students and staff may not be at school if they are coughing or having stomach distress (throwing up or diarrhea).
  - If your child has seasonal allergies, you may wish to ask your doctor for a letter stating that for our files.

## What's NOT changing?

**The health and safety of our students remains our biggest priority.**

- We will continue to keep buses ventilated with windows in the front and back partially open.
- At this time, distancing practices in classrooms, the cafeteria and on buses will remain the same.
- We are also going to continue the practice of not eating in the classrooms. Drinking fountains will be turned back on, but will be sanitized daily.
- **Schools must still offer access to COVID testing. We will continue to do so through our school office. Just call and ask.** Schools must also report COVID cases to local public health departments, much like we already do for illnesses such as chicken pox. Positive tests (including home tests) should still be reported to school districts.
- We will still notify groups of people identified as close contacts of a positive COVID case. **Individual contact tracing and notification of individual close contacts will no longer be required, unless the person exposed is considered at high-risk for COVID infection.**
- **Our school district will continue the following safety measures, knowing that they are useful in preventing many kinds of contagious infections (colds, flu, intestinal “bugs,” as well as COVID) from spreading:**
  - Improved ventilation
  - Continued cleaning and disinfecting protocols; this includes hands being “spritzed” when kids arrive at school.
  - Maintaining physical distancing as much as possible.
  - Promoting handwashing and good hygiene.
  - Maximizing outdoor activities as much as possible.
- We want to welcome back volunteers in the school. If you would like to help out at school, we need either proof of immunization or a request for a waiver of the immunization requirement, just as we require of our employees. If you want an example of a waiver request, just ask.

We understand that these changes will be met with anxiety by some and excitement by others. Please be respectful of one another as each individual decides what prevention and safety measures are right for their personal or family circumstances.

Compassion will be critical as we safely modify mitigation measures that were put in place over the past two years. If you have questions, please connect with Principal Smith, Jen Machado, or me. We will share more information with you as we receive it and as we update our school district practices to align with the new guidance.

Sincerely,



Ann Varkados, Ed.D., Superintendent