

## 1.10.22 COVID-19 UPDATES Q & A

Dear Northwest community,

Please review the information below regarding COVID updates. Information continues to be fluent and ever changing....so stay tuned! **Thank you** for being proactive and notifying the district of any positive and/or potential cases as well as potential exposure for your child. We appreciate your continued cooperation!

**REMINDER--do not send students to school ill! When in doubt, stay home and call your doctor!**

*Are there positive cases in the district?*

Yes. We continue to have positive and quarantine situations. Please refer to the district website for updates as this information is updated weekly by the superintendent's office. **We have had increasing positive case numbers and quarantined situations over the past 2 weeks.**

*Are you seeing any variants of the virus (Delta, Omicron, etc.) in the district?*

Unable to determine. Test results from a PCR or antigen test denotes positive or negative results for the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Samples are forwarded on from the state level to the CDC where it is determined if the virus is a variant; this information is not reported to our school.

*Will the COVID-19 vaccine be required for school?*

At this time, the COVID vaccine is not required for school attendance. It is a personal choice for you and your child. COVID-19 vaccines are effective at helping protect against severe disease and death from the virus that causes COVID-19, including known variants currently circulating. Everyone ages 5 and older can get vaccinated against COVID-19. CDC and PADOH now recommend booster shots at 5 months after the completion of the primary series of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for those aged 12 and older.

Please notify your child's building administrator if he/she receives the COVID vaccine, including a BOOSTER vaccine. A copy of the vaccine card with dates will be kept in your child's health record. This information is extremely important for quarantine purposes.

I([https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html?s\\_cid=10536:%2Bthe%20%2Bcovid%20%2Bvaccine:sem.b:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html?s_cid=10536:%2Bthe%20%2Bcovid%20%2Bvaccine:sem.b:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21))

*Who should I contact at the school if my child has been exposed to a positive case **outside of school**--such as exposure to a positive family member?*

Your child's building principal as well as your Healthcare Provider (HCP) as soon as possible. This information will then be shared with the School Nurse for additional follow-up if needed. Also, please notify your child's building principal if your child gets tested for COVID-19. Again, *thank you* for being proactive and notifying the district of any positive and/or potential cases as well as potential exposure for your child.

*What is "contact tracing"?*

Contact tracing is a disease control measure used by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) & CDC to help control the spread of the virus by identifying the close contacts of an infected person. This information is obtained by administration through interviewing the student and/or classroom seating arrangements.

*What's the difference between a "positive case" and a "close contact".*

A case has a tested positive for COVID-19. A close contact is someone who is exposed to a positive case, therefore at risk for acquiring COVID-19.

*What's a "close contact"?*

**Please refer to this link for the current CDC definition. This is important if you child tests positive for COVID-19 and is interviewed to provide a close contact list to administration.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/K-12-infographic.html> The date of exposure could include the last day the positive case was in school as well as 24-48 hours before the positive case developed symptoms. You will receive additional information from the School Nurse if your child has been identified as a close contact at school and recommendations to quarantine. Testing is recommended immediately should your child develop any symptoms during quarantine.

*What should I do if my child has received notification that he/she is considered a "close contact" to a positive case at school and asked to "quarantine"?*

Quarantine is a requirement from the PADOH for an individual identified as a **close contact**. This means staying home for 5 days (day of exposure is day 0) after your child's date of last exposure to a positive case, minimizing contacts with others, and monitoring your child for any symptoms of COVID-19. Your child may return to school on day 6 of quarantine if your child has no symptoms and wears a properly fitting mask. Remember—the virus could still be spread even if the individual has no symptoms. We call this an "asymptomatic carrier". Everyday precautions should continue. Contact your Healthcare Provider or PADOH with any questions or concerns during the quarantine period. Testing is recommended immediately should your child develop any symptoms during quarantine.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/K-12-infographic.html>

*My child is vaccinated. Does he/she still need to quarantine if exposed to a positive case?*

Children who have been fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine. However, they are required to wear a well fitting mask for 10 days. A person is considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 ≥2 weeks after receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna) or ≥2 weeks after receipt of the single dose of the Janssen (J & J) vaccine.

*My child has had COVID. Does he/she still need to quarantine if exposed to a positive case?*

Your child does not need to quarantine if the following conditions are met: 1) Your child has tested positive with a viral test within the past 90 days from date of exposure to the positive case. 2) The district has a copy of the positive viral test on file or note from HCP validating the positive home test.

*What should I do if I think my child has symptoms of COVID-19?*

If your child has not been identified as a close contact but has possible symptoms of COVID-19, notify your HCP. It is best for your child to remain at home until you receive further direction from your child's HCP. Please notify the school.

*My child is vaccinated but has symptoms of COVID-19. What happens now?*

Breakthrough infections do occur. If your child has been vaccinated and is experiencing COVID symptoms, notify your HCP. Testing is recommended. Isolation guidelines are followed regardless of vaccination status. Please notify the school.

*What are some of the symptoms of COVID-19?*

Symptoms include: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Because the symptoms are so varied, the PADOH no longer uses the Symptom Monitoring

Tool used last school year. However, the isolation rooms are still utilized for students displaying concerning symptoms during the school day prior to being sent home.

*Am I able to use a "home test" for my child?*

We are continuing to learn more about the accuracy of home tests. Currently, this district is requiring a note from your child's HCP validating the results of the home test. Area HCPs have been wonderful collaborating with the district and many HCPs have ordered additional testing.

*What does it mean if my child is asked to "isolate"?*

Isolation is a requirement from the PADOH for an individual **testing positive** for COVID-19, or **awaiting test results**. This means staying in an isolated area in your home for 5 days (day of exposure is day 0), separate from others in the household to help prevent the spread of the virus and monitoring the symptoms of COVID-19. Contact your Healthcare Provider or PADOH with any questions or concerns during the isolation period. Your child may return to school on day 6 of the isolation period as long as the following are met: symptoms have improved, and fever-free for 24 hrs. without the use of fever-reducing medication, wear a well-fitting mask at all times.

*What's a contact of a close contact?*

Individual who had or continues to have contact with a close contact. No specific DOH guidance at this time. Continue everyday preventive actions.

## Key Takeaways from CDC (updated 1/6/22)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction continues to be a priority.
- Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all\* students (ages 2 years and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- New CDC guidance has reduced the recommended time for isolation and quarantine periods to five days. For details see CDC's page on [Quarantine and Isolation](#).
- In addition to universal indoor masking, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple prevention strategies, such as screening testing.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.

- This guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning.
- Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

Stay safe! Stay healthy!

***Carmela Shiptoski MSN, RN, NCSN***

*Certified School Nurse*

*Health Services Department Chairperson*

*Northwest Area School District, K-12*

*570-542-4126, Ext. 1113*

*Fax-570-542-0185*

[Carmela.Shiptoski@nasdedu.com](mailto:Carmela.Shiptoski@nasdedu.com)