



Minnetonka Public Schools
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Dear Parents and Students,

I hope you are staying warm and healthy during these cold January days! As we look ahead to next week and the beginning of second semester, we have some adjustments to the Safe Learning Plan that I need to share with you.

NEW TEMPORARY MASK MANDATE

Last night, at the January School Board Special Meeting, the Board made the decision to institute a temporary mask mandate for students in grades 9-12 and for students in the S.A.I.L. program. All staff of and visitors to Minnetonka High School, the S.A.I.L. transition program, VANTAGE facilities and MOMENTUM facilities must also follow this new requirement, which is in effect during school hours, from Monday, January 25, 2022 through Friday, February 25, 2022 allowing for the same exemption protocols that are currently in place for E-8 students.

The change was made after a long discussion which included an update from the District's Health Services Director, a review of the District's COVID case counts and information from the Minnesota Department of Health. It also included discussion of the input from the recent Safe Learning Plan survey sent to students, parents and staff, as well as from Community Comments and Citizen Input from the January School Board Meeting and from last night's Study Session.

This temporary mask mandate for MHS, S.A.I.L., VANTAGE and MOMENTUM locations will expire on February 25, unless the Board makes another decision to extend it beyond that date. The E-8 mask mandate will remain in place until the Board decides otherwise.

As a result of this temporary mandate, there will be no quarantining of close contacts in the High School (similar to the elementary and middle schools) because of the mask requirement. The Safe Learning Plan allows this exception that excludes students in an indoor classroom from quarantining when both the COVID-positive person and the close contact were wearing well-fitting masks. When this temporary mask mandate sunsets, close contacts of a COVID-positive person at the High School will once again be quarantined unless they meet exemption criteria.

As a reminder, the District has N95 and KN95 masks available for students. Please connect with your school office for those effective masks.

ISOLATION UPDATE

Another update that needs to be shared is regarding isolation lengths following a positive COVID test. As you know, our current District protocols require any COVID-positive student or staff member to isolate for ten days. This is still considered best practice by the Minnesota Department of Health. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control made changes to its guidelines, allowing a reduced isolation for individuals experiencing no symptoms or mild symptoms. Our school district has been piloting this change with **staff only** at this time, beginning January 20, 2022. This pilot with staff will be used to evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of a shortened isolation period prior to the District considering extending this option to students.

The reduced isolation time for staff means that staff who have tested positive for COVID may return after they complete a full 5-day isolation as long as the criteria outlined below are met:

First, staff who meet any of the following conditions are not eligible for the reduced isolation: 1) They have a weakened immune system (immunocompromised); 2) They had a moderate or severe illness; 3) They required hospitalization.

Additionally, staff who would like to request a reduced isolation period, (returning to work on day 6) must strictly adhere to the following conditions. If these conditions are not followed, staff could be required to complete their full 10-day isolation:

- They have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Their symptoms have improved and are mild or non-existent.
- They wear a well-fitting N95, KN95 or K94 mask while in/on school property for day 6 through day 10, except when eating or drinking.
- They keep a physical distance of 6 feet between themselves and others, as much as possible, for day 6 through day 10.
- They eat in a location at least 12 feet away from others for day 6 through day 10.
- They avoid people who are immunocompromised or at high risk for severe disease for day 6 through day 10 at all times.

Final consideration: If a staff member is asymptomatic and then develops symptoms after testing positive, the 5-day isolation period starts over.

Again, we are piloting this 5-day isolation with staff only, so it does not apply to students at this time. If we determine it is logistically feasible and practical to offer this to students, we will, of course, share that with you. Any student use of this isolation period (in the future) would then have the same requirements outlined above for staff. If you have questions, please connect Health Services Director, Annie Lumbar Bendson at annie.lumbarbendson@minnetonkaschools.org.

LIVE-STREAMING OPTIONS

A final update I'd like to provide is a recap what was shared with you earlier this week by Dr. Amy LaDue, our Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. As she explained, we have worked with the Minnetonka Teachers Association to revise our agreement with them regarding livestream instruction in order to temporarily increase live-streaming options, whenever possible, for this past week and for the first two weeks of the second semester (January 19-February 4) in core classes for elementary students who are learning remotely due to any reason and not just due to COVID-related absences. And, live-streaming options are increasing, whenever possible, for middle and high school students learning remotely due to any reason and not just COVID-related absences for the first two weeks of the second semester (January 25-February 4). When a teacher is not able to live-stream, they will continue to provide and communicate an instructional plan for all absent students. This temporary change allows students to stay current with

their studies, to wrap up first semester well and to get a good start on second semester, regardless of whether students are able to attend school in-person. If you have specific questions about this, I'd ask that you direct them to Dr. LaDue at amy.ladue@minnetonkaschools.org.

As always, I'd like to thank you for all you are doing to keep our school community safe and healthy. These are challenging times, and we will continue to take steps necessary to keep students and staff safe and in school. This is an exceptional community of supportive and engaged students, teachers, staff and parents, and we are grateful for each of you.

Dennis L. Peterson
Superintendent of Schools