



**Minnetonka Public Schools**  
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Dear Parents and Students,

I hope you and your family are doing well and beginning to think about the coming school year. We are determined to make it a great year for all students and staff. I want to share some important news with you regarding the coming school year.

The School Board approved our Return-to-School Safe Learning Plan at its meeting last night, and I want to provide you with the details of its decision. There has been considerable input into the discussion about the plan from parents, especially on the issues of masks and quarantining.

I want to assure all of you that the District takes the coronavirus pandemic seriously and intends to provide high levels of safety to students and staff of the District within a positive learning environment. Most of the important elements of the Return-to-School Safe Learning Plan for the 2021-22 school year are described below. Many of the elements of the Plan have been in place during 2020-21, and a few of them have been altered to reflect new science conclusions or the current condition of the Coronavirus.

The Minnetonka District is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for each employee, student, parent and visitor to our buildings. This Plan identifies and explains the practices and protocols to help ensure the District has a safe and healthy learning environment and helps mitigate transmission of COVID-19 in our school communities during the school year.

Our primary focus continues to be the education of our students, while integrating health and safety responses into our existing pre-pandemic public health support. It is understood that public health organizations have provided medical advice, and some local physicians and others encourage the District to simply follow that advice alone without consideration of other factors. We need to consider the public policy implications of a broader set of criteria. While we will continue to evaluate recommendations of the public health agencies, we believe in allowing families personal choice and responsibility regarding some elements of the Plan. We look forward to our continued partnership with our community this school year, and we remain committed to students' educational success and to keeping our learning communities safe.

Many things have changed since the start of the 2020-21 school year, when the virus was very new, and we operated under direction of the Governor of Minnesota. Millions of people have had COVID-19 over the past year, and science has revealed that those

individuals have developed an immunity that is, at least, equivalent to the vaccines' impact on fighting the virus. Thousands of those recovered persons live in our communities, and they are providing a certain level of immunity.

Furthermore, since January, millions more people have received one of the three vaccines created to combat the virus, and thousands of persons in our communities have received the recommended dosages of the vaccines. A large percentage of Minnetonka staff have been vaccinated, and over 71% of our high school students and about 63% of our middle school students who are twelve or older have received the vaccine.

Another very important part of the condition of the population of students in our schools is that younger people are still far less likely to get the virus and have much lower levels of complications from the virus, according to current data. We also need to weigh the differences in the Delta strain of the virus, which is more contagious but appears to be less dangerous for serious illness or death. However, it is still a threat. Those realities are important to the District in providing educational activities in the Coronavirus environment. The other important variables to be considered are the incidence of these factors in our communities and in the schools themselves.

Therefore, the District will continue to emphasize the importance of layering strategies, as informed by regular monitoring of community transmission levels, vaccination coverage levels, screening/testing results and the occurrence of outbreaks. This plan will be updated (as needed) based on this information and our evaluation and interpretation of all applicable executive orders and current and future guidance and standards from the Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

All staff, students, families and visitors, as allowed, are expected to comply with and follow the established guidelines and protocols in this Plan for the health and safety of our community. Site leaders and supervisors are expected to ensure compliance with these provisions and support employees, as needed.

**Learning Model for all grades:**

All students in Grades preK-12 will be offered in-person learning to open the school year. All students in Grades K-8 will be offered an e-learning option, except Immersion which will only be offered online if enough students enroll. High school students can be full-time online, if they choose, by taking Tonka Online courses, which have been expanded to meet all graduation requirements. They will receive help from counselors in building their schedules. The high school and middle schools will follow the six-period schedules used before the pandemic.

Teachers will be expected to work in the in-person option of the program in all grades, and sufficient numbers of teachers will be assigned to the e-learning students in Grades K-8 to provide those learning opportunities to students who select that option. Sufficient

numbers of high school teachers will be assigned to the Tonka Online courses to offer the courses students want and need.

The District will be prepared to shift to virtual learning only if conditions dictate, or in case the Governor orders the closing of in-person instruction. We do not know the future course of COVID-19 and future variants.

### **Masks and Quarantines**

I want to cover the details of the mask and quarantine issues first. Both have changed from last year for many students and staff.

The Board has determined that **all students and staff in Grades K-8 and visitors to our elementary and middle schools will be required to wear masks** at all times at school. There will be a process for exceptions in unusual situations.

Furthermore, it is **strongly recommended that students and staff in Grades 9-12 and visitors to the High School wear masks.**

**By federal requirement, all students on buses will need to wear masks.**

We believe the N95 and KN95 masks are far superior in their effectiveness in protecting the wearer of the mask and others than the options used by many students and staff. The District has more than 300,000 of these masks in different sizes, and they will be provided to students and staff, as requested. These are not masks that can be washed, so they will need to be replaced frequently.

While other types of masks will, of course, be allowed at our schools, we encourage parents interested in the N95 or KN95 masks to purchase a good supply for their students to use after the initial few distributions of them at the schools.

The handling of quarantining is going to be different this year because the characteristics of the Delta variant are different. We want to keep students in school as much as possible and provide safety to all students.

In Grades K-8, close contacts will not need to quarantine at all, regardless of vaccination status or prior COVID infections within the past 90 days. This is because of the implementation of the mask requirement in the elementary and middle schools. The Safe Learning Plan allows this exception that excludes students in an indoor classroom from quarantining when both the case and close contact were wearing well-fitting masks. Contact tracing will still be completed to inform families of a potential exposure.

When a Grades 9-12 student or staff member is infected with COVID-19, they will need to quarantine for 10 consecutive days and/or be tested before returning to school. Close contacts, as determined by school officials, will not have to be quarantined at all if they have been vaccinated or have had COVID within the past 90 days. Close contacts who have not been vaccinated and who have not had COVID

within the past 90 days will need to quarantine for 10 days (without testing) or five days with a negative test in order to return to school. These two measures will help keep students safe and in school. These measures are in place because masks are not required at the High School.

### **Quarantine and Isolation Guidelines:**

- All COVID-19 positive school community members are required to report their positive test results to their building and/or program supervisor.
- Individuals who test positive for COVID will be required to isolate until all three of these things are true: (1) It has been at least 10 days since they first felt sick or tested positive (if asymptomatic); (2) and they feel better. Their cough, shortness of breath and other symptoms are better; (3) and, they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

Minnetonka Schools will require a quarantine period for those identified as a close contact of a COVID positive case AND who do not qualify for an exemption from quarantine due to vaccine status or a previous COVID infection within the last 90 days.

### **Exposure at School/School-Sponsored Activity**

After exposure at school or in a school-sponsored activity, the standard quarantine is a 10-day period. A shortened quarantine (5-day period) may be requested by completing the appropriate form. This requires a molecular/PCR test to be completed after a full 5 days of quarantine. Testing is required on or after day five, and a negative test result needs to be shown before returning to school or activities.

### **Exposure within the Household**

If a member of a household tests positive for COVID, all members of that household are subject to a quarantine period. The standard quarantine is a 14-day period for those students living in the same household as a COVID positive member. A shortened quarantine (10-day period) may be requested by completing the appropriate form. This requires a molecular/PCR test to be completed after a full 10 days of quarantine. Testing is required on or after day 10, and a negative test result needs to be shown before returning to school or activities.

### **Exemptions from Quarantine**

There will be no quarantining of close contacts in 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 case and close contact were wearing well-fitting masks.

There are certain additional circumstances where students and staff in the District may be exempt from quarantine.

If someone has completed COVID-19 vaccination (two doses in a two-dose series or

one dose in a one-dose series) and is exposed, they do not need to quarantine if ALL of the following are true: (1) The COVID-19 exposure was at least 14 days after their vaccination series was fully completed; (2) They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19; and, (3) They have provided documentation of their vaccination series to the school health office and/or Director of Health Services that clearly indicates their name, date(s) of vaccination, and vaccine brand.

If a student or staff member does not want to provide their vaccine information and/or testing results, then they would be subject to the quarantine.

If someone has previously been infected with COVID-19 and is subsequently identified as a close contact, they do not need to quarantine if ALL of the following are true: (1) Their COVID-19 illness was laboratory confirmed and exposure was within 90 days of their positive test; and (2) They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19; and (3) They have provided documentation of their COVID positive results to the school health office and/or Director of Health Services that clearly indicates their name, source of testing, date of testing, and positive test results.

If a student or staff member does not want to provide documentation around their positive test results, then they would be subject to a quarantine.

### **Revisiting the Plan in October**

The School Board will revisit the Plan at its October 7 meeting to determine if any provisions can be changed. By that time, we will know more about the course of COVID in our community and the schools.

We know this is a more challenging situation than we hoped would not be the case this fall, but the Delta variant has really changed the conditions, and the Board wants to be cautious.

I encourage you to read these expectations carefully and ask questions of the District, if you have them. The full plan is available on the [District website](#), along with other resources and information.

We all wish your children and you a successful and safe year. We will continue to work together to manage the circumstances we are given. Remember the first day of school this year is on Wednesday, September 8.

Sincerely,

Dennis L. Peterson  
Superintendent of Schools