

Shaler Area School District

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Dear Shaler Area families,

As winter finally gives way to spring, we are pleased to welcome this season with renewed outlook and some positive news in our collective crusade against a global pandemic that reaches a two-year milestone this month.

We are encouraged that COVID-19 cases within both Allegheny County and the Shaler Area School District have continued to decline at a steady rate over the past several months. This is promising and gives us reason to re-evaluate our mitigation efforts within the District.

Last evening, the Board of School Directors voted to amend our [Health & Safety Plan](#). We wanted to include **five important updates in a Q&A format** regarding additional modifications to the District's response to COVID-19. We ask you to take a few minutes to carefully review the following, and if you have specific questions related to your family's situation, we encourage you to reach out to your school principal, school nurse, or school counselor.

Q: What is the District's current policy pertaining to universal face masking?

A: On February 26, 2022, Shaler Area School District announced that in response to updated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance that **effective immediately face masks will no longer be required in Shaler Area School District at any time, [including on school buses and vans](#)**. While the District plans to remain in a mask-optional environment for the remainder of the school year, please note that if we discover rising case counts in our schools or classrooms or transition to a high community level per the CDC, the District will reinstate the universal masking policy.

Q: What happens if my student tests positive for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status)?

A: Immediately contact your [school nurse](#) and **do NOT send your child to school** until you have made contact with our staff.

- **Regardless of vaccination status**, students should **stay home for 5 days after symptom onset**. If the individual has no symptoms, they can return to school after 5 days and must continue to wear a mask around others for Days 6-10. If they have a fever, continue to stay at home until the fever resolves.

- If a student is displaying COVID-19 symptoms and visits one of our nursing offices, they may be asked to wear a face mask while the nurse is assessing the student.

Q: Will the District continue to contact-trace and identify close contacts?

A: As Shaler Area School District has transitioned to masks being optional, the District will discontinue the contact tracing process, unless otherwise directed by the Allegheny County Health Department. Additionally, students who may have been in close contact both inside and outside of school and remain asymptomatic will no longer need to quarantine, regardless of vaccination status.

Q: What is the District's response to a classroom or school that has an increase in active COVID-19 cases?

A: When a single classroom and/or school building is showing a significant increase in cases over a 14-day period, the District will institute increased cleaning and disinfection. The District will continue to monitor case counts throughout our schools and may revisit our Health & Safety Plan should there be any drastic changes in local conditions or if we receive new advice from the Allegheny County Health Department.

Q: Based on the updated guidance and optional masking announcement, if I wish for my child to transition to the Shaler Area Virtual Institute who do I contact?

A: The SASD virtual offerings provide all families K-12 with the option of full-time online instruction for the 2021-22 school year as an alternative to returning to a physical school building. If you have additional questions about Shaler Area's virtual options for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year or enrollment, please contact Mrs. Eloise Milligan at Milligane@shalerarea.org or by calling 412-492-1200 ext. 2820.

While we've faced incredible challenges together over the past 24 months, we have discovered examples of our strength as a community at every turn. Achieving our shared goal of remaining open for in-person learning is the direct result of your unwavering collaboration — your support at home and the mitigation efforts in each one of our school buildings. We wish to thank our entire school community for its united support — helping us to make it through the tough times, trusting that we are doing all we can to keep our students and staff safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sean C. Aiken
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Bryan E. O'Black
Deputy Superintendent