

# OLD FORT LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Home of the Stockaders

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Dear Old Fort Parents and Community,

Recently the Ohio Department of Health modified the guidelines for quarantining students. This is mainly due to a study conducted this Fall with 9 Ohio school districts that explored the question: *If a child in a supervised setting was in close contact (defined as within six feet for 15 minutes) to another child with COVID-19 and both children were wearing masks properly, did the close contact child need to stay home to quarantine?* Data analysis shows that children who were close contacts between 3-6 feet in the classroom setting and appropriately masked had rates of COVID-19 that were similar to children with no known COVID exposure in school. The COVID-19 rate in the comparison group suggests community transmission outside the school setting. In other words, because of the safety precautions schools are taking, children are not primarily contracting the virus in the classroom setting.

The Seneca County Health Department is following these new recommendations. We continue to work with the Seneca County Health Department to determine quarantine decisions. Going forward students who are exposed to a person who is positive for COVID will be quarantined for 10 days (removed from extracurricular activities for 14 days) but have school privileges (what we call a "school pass") if the following conditions are met:

- The exposure occurred within the **classroom environment** or while on required school transportation (e.g., school bus).
- The person with COVID-19 and any associated contacts were wearing facemasks that covered their nose and mouth at all times.
- Social distancing of at least 3 feet was maintained.

The above applies only to classroom settings and school transportation in which students are between 3-6 feet of the positive individual for 15 minutes or longer. In all other situations, including students who are exposed outside of school or during extracurricular activities, school privileges do not apply. Students who have exposure in these situations would be required to stay home from school for 10 days and refrain from participation in extracurriculars for 14 days.

The following Questions & Answers may add some additional clarification to the quarantine changes:

Q: What is the timeframe for contact tracing?

A: Contact tracing dates back 48 hours prior to the start of symptoms or 48 hours prior to a positive test if the individual is asymptomatic.

Q: Does a student who tests positive for COVID still have to be removed from school and be isolated for 10 days?

A: Yes. A positive student is not eligible for a school pass.

Q: Why are athletes testing positive for COVID allowed to return to sports after only 10 days while those who are exposed to an infected individual are required to remain out of sports for 14 days?

A: It is assumed that the individual testing positive has been infected for a 7-14 incubation period prior to the start of symptoms. Therefore, 10 days after the onset of symptoms is outside of the contagious window for transmitting the virus, and students are permitted to return to normal activities.

Q: Do students who sit near a positive student in the classroom have to quarantine from school?

A: It depends on several factors: students seated by the positive person for greater than 15 minutes in the classroom will not need to quarantine from school (they have a school pass) if they are seated between 3-6 feet apart and wearing masks the entire time they are in class; however, these students would need to quarantine from all other outside activities for 10 days and from extracurricular activities for 14 days. Students seated within 3 feet of the positive person for greater than 15 minutes would need to quarantine from school for 10 days and from extracurriculars for 14 days.

Q: Do students have to quarantine if they sit with a COVID-positive person during lunch?

A: Yes, this is because masks are removed during lunch. The amount of time the students are without masks does NOT matter. If students are unmasked for any amount of time during the school day and within 6 feet of a positive student, they must quarantine for 10 days from class and 14 days from extracurricular activities.

Q: Why are quarantined students allowed to return to school after 10 days but made to refrain from sports for 14 days?

A: When the quarantine time was shortened by the Ohio Department of Health from 14 to 10 days in December for exposed individuals, the recommended actions for that early return were that the individual must remain masked and maintain social distancing. Since masking and social distancing cannot be maintained during sports, athletes must fulfill the original 14 day optimal quarantine period.

Q: If it is discovered that a player from an opposing team tests positive and had contact with our players during the contagious period, who has to quarantine?

A: All players who participated in the game with the positive individual. The rule regarding 6 feet of distance for 15 minutes does not apply in sports situations due to fact that players are unmasked and are participating in a contact sport.

Q: Do teachers and other school staff have to quarantine?

A: If deemed a close contact of less than 3 feet, school staff are recommended to quarantine. However, because school personnel are considered essential workers, they are able to choose to return to work if specific conditions can be met (masked at all times, maintain 6 feet of distance, show no symptoms, etc.). We have also allowed teachers to work from home, when possible, if this is in the best interest of students to maintain continuity of instruction. School staff who test positive for COVID do not have the option to return to work under the essential worker rule.

Q: Does someone have to quarantine once they have the vaccination?

A: Currently, we are being told by the Seneca County Health Department that an individual would not have to quarantine starting 14 days after the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the vaccine.

Q: If my child has had COVID, does he/she still have to quarantine?

A: It depends on the timing. An individual does not have to quarantine for 90 days from the date of their positive COVID test. Once 90 days after the positive test passes, quarantine rules apply once again.

Q: If my child tests positive for the antibodies, does he/she still have to quarantine?

A: Yes. The antibody tests only reveals that the virus has been in their system, but does not indicate when the person first contracted the virus. Without a positive test result, the antibody test does not allow one to bypass the quarantine rules.

Please know that we follow all guidance from the Seneca County Health Department and consult with them regularly regarding quarantine situations. We will continue to notify parents and the community when we have a positive COVID case and identify close contacts as soon as possible if any exposure occurred at school as a result of a positive case. Thank you for your continued support as we make our way through this challenging time and do not hesitate to reach out with any further questions you may have. Thank you.

With Children at Heart,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura F. Bryant".

Laura F. Bryant, Superintendent

