

# LEE COUNTY SCHOOLS



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September 15, 2021

To: Lee County Families, Staff, and Community

During the Lee County School District regularly scheduled board meeting last night, our board voted unanimously to adopt a COVID-19 School Operation Plan that includes universal masking for all staff, students, and visitors to our school facilities following the same guidelines as the state regulation that Senate Bill 1 revoked. As superintendent, it my job to recommend to the board those policies and procedures that will protect the safety of our students and staff. To make this recommendation I relied on the guidance from the Department for Public Health, the CDC, and the American Academy for Pediatrics who all state that wearing masks when incidence rates of COVID in the community are at a high level will slow the spread of the virus.

When the legislators put this decision into the hands of our local board members, I reached out to the public to receive input for our board members because they are elected official chosen to make the best decisions for our students. From the individual input I was receiving, I knew most parents supported us wearing masks in the schools, and I wanted to have data to share with the board. Over 80% of the 242 people that responded to our survey support universal masking at all times during the pandemic or when incidence rates are high in our community. We are in a time right now when incidence rates are high and universal masking is helping us maintain in person learning.

In the Lee County Schools we are implementing several mitigation strategies, and we are finding that our schools are doing well with stopping the spread of the virus. Testing is a key component that we added to help our students and families. Yesterday we screened 191 students and staff and found only 1 positive case at each school for a total of 2 positive cases. We had to quarantine 4 students at the elementary school and none at the middle high School. We provide testing free of charge to our students and staff at both schools who become symptomatic during the day as well as at our central office location so symptomatic students and staff don't enter the schools. If you want your child to participate in the weekly screenings or to be tested when they have symptoms, please complete a permission form and return it to your child's school.

Most of the quarantines and positive student cases that we know of right now are occurring outside the schools, and our families are doing a very good job communicating with us and keeping their children out of school when sick and in quarantine when they have been exposed to a positive COVID case. Contact tracing and quarantining is another mitigation strategy that is helping us, and your cooperation is critical to the success of keeping our schools safe. We appreciate all you are doing to communicate with us. We now have a COVID-19 dashboard on the Superintendent Message page of our district webpage so you can see how many students and staff are positive or are in quarantine on the

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day you look at the dashboard. The majority of the positive cases and quarantined students were not found in our schools but have been reported to us by families.

We will be working with the Department for Public Health between now and the October school board meeting to determine when it will be safe for us to reduce mask wearing in our buildings. When we had summer school, the community incidence rates were very low and we were successful without wearing masks. We believe we will be there again if we keep other mitigation strategies in place and continue screening and testing. When Governor Beshear made the decision for us to wear masks, our students and families met the challenge so we could have in person learning. When the state school board made the decision, our families supported us and students were successful wearing masks. We ask you now that the decision has been placed on us locally to continue to support us so that we can continue to have in person learning, slow the spread of the virus, and get back to a place that we will be able to remove the masks with confidence.

Sincerely,



Sarah S. Wasson  
Superintendent  
Lee County Schools