

South Lewis Central School District

Mr. Douglas Premo, Superintendent

4264 East Rd
PO Box 10
Turin, NY 13473
315-348-2500
Fax: 315-348-2510
www.southlewis.org

September 22, 2021

Dear South Lewis School Community:

This letter is to inform you that the South Lewis Board of Education has approved an immediate change to the indoor masking policy in South Lewis Central Schools. Unfortunately, over the past week we have seen ten COVID+ student cases resulting in isolation. These ten COVID+ cases have also placed well over 100 students in quarantine.

Several of these student cases have been within the same grade level, raising our level of concern that transmission of COVID-19 may be occurring within our school. Additionally, Lewis County currently has one of the highest COVID positivity rates in New York State. Lastly, Lewis County has also seen multiple pediatric hospitalizations due to COVID for children who have had no underlying or pre-existing conditions.

We attempted to start the year with "flexible masking" practices allowing for the majority of ones' day to be spent mask free. However, this has sent us down a path that is leading towards the inevitable closure of school for in-person instruction and full remote learning for all. In response, the District has determined that we need to adjust our masking practices to protect and preserve in-person teaching and learning.

Beginning on Thursday, September 23, 2021 our masking policy will be as follows:

- Masks must be worn at all times on the bus
- Masks must be worn at all times indoors
- Masks must have at least 2-layers (be 2-ply)
- Masks will not be required to be worn when eating, drinking or outdoors

Mask breaks, when possible and appropriate, will be allowed throughout the day at the discretion of the classroom teachers to be in line with contact tracing guidelines.

The new masking policy will result in less exposure to the virus and significantly fewer students placed into quarantine. When exposed to a COVID+ student, NYSDOH guidelines require the quarantining of any student who was within 6-feet or less without a mask for 15 minutes or more. Unfortunately, with all students returning to in-person instruction every day, we simply do not have the ability to have all students 6-feet from each other. The result has been large numbers of students being quarantined. However, if both students are masked, students will only be quarantined if the physical distancing from the COVID+ student is less than 3-feet. Fortunately, we are able to maintain 3-feet of physical distancing between students in the vast majority of our classrooms. Therefore, making this change to our masking practices will allow us to keep our students in school and give us the best chance to continue with every day in-person instruction.

Our number one goal has been to keep our students, faculty/staff and school community safe, while protecting the ability to offer every day in-person instruction for all. This change in masking practices helps us to best achieve this goal.

As always, we will continue to monitor and review our protocols and practices as the year progresses. Thank you for your understanding and ongoing cooperation. Be well and be safe.

Sincerely,



Douglas Premo
Superintendent of Schools