



September 2

Dear Edmond Families,

I am writing this letter to notify you of changes to our COVID Learning Plan. I have never been one to back down from a hard decision when I knew it was the right decision. This is a hard decision. After meeting and talking with respected medical professionals and the Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD), as well as watching how Covid has raced through different classrooms and grade levels, I have determined we need to move from "masks encouraged" to "masks required." The goal is - and always has been - to keep students safe and in school.

This requirement will go into effect **September 8** for all staff and students in grades 1-12 and apply to all indoor settings, including schools, buses, and district offices. PK-K students will wear their masks when traveling throughout the building and when sitting in groups. Like last year, students will be given frequent opportunities for mask breaks throughout the day. The mask requirement will remain in effect until October 13, the end of the first nine weeks. At that time, this decision will be reviewed.

Why masks? Masks will help us to obtain our goal of keeping students and teachers in class. When there is a close contact exposure the radius of quarantines decreases from 6 feet to 3 feet if both parties are wearing masks. This reduces our quarantines and allows more students to stay in school.

Exemptions:

If parents/legal guardians or eligible students indicate that compliance with the new requirement is not possible due to medical, religious, or strong personal reasons, they may request an exemption in writing by completing this exemption [form](#). Only a completed and signed copy of the exemption form emailed or delivered to the school will revoke the mask requirement. Go to the "Covid Updates" quick link at edmondschools.net to access the form and the individual school emails used to submit the form. Today's

decision will stir emotions and create many questions. I've tried to answer some of the most likely questions about masks and other topics below.

Will the district be providing "supplemental" adult and child-sized masks?

Yes, if a student comes to school without a mask, school sites will have a disposable mask available.

Will masks be required for indoor athletic and arts events, concerts, contests, competitions?

Yes. All indoor activities will be treated the same as the classroom and masks will be required.

Will masks be required outdoors for athletics, student activities, or recess?

Not at this time.

Will attendance be limited for any indoor or outdoor events?

Not at this time. Attendance at these types of activities is voluntary. Attendees should be aware that there will be people in the crowd who have opted out of the mask requirement and will not be wearing a face covering.

Can kids be seated in class according to "opting out" versus "not opting out" to spare those in masks from having to quarantine?

No. Seating arrangements should be based on creating a classroom environment optimal for learning.

Will Virtual Edmond Enrollment be extended due to the mask requirement?

No. Staffing has already occurred for VE. Allowing students to switch back and forth throughout the semester from VE to in-person is disruptive to their learning.

Are there any other changes being made to the 2021-2022 Learning Plan?

Yes. Most notably, the district has eliminated the tiered plan. The tiered plan was in place for masks and school closures. After extensive consultation with

medical professionals, masks should not be implemented once a site reaches a certain level of positive cases. Masks should be implemented as a preventative measure from the beginning. Also, we have been able to work with the OCCHD concerning site closure and to make smaller closures such as a class, grade level, or team without closing an entire site.

If my child completes an exemption, how can I be assured that they will be treated fairly regardless of this choice?

Mask-bullying will not be allowed and will be investigated just like any other reported incident of bullying. Mask issues should not take away from our goal of quality instruction for all students.

Can I keep my student home to avoid exposure, quarantines, or illness?

Yes, but your child will be counted absent. The Covid Excused Absence (DVAP) only applies to symptomatic students, diagnosed positive Covid isolations and exposure quarantines (including families who self-quarantine siblings with a positive or exposed brother or sister).

Will the occasional volunteer who enters a school site be required to wear a mask?

Yes

Across the board, parents, educators, and public health officials agree that in-person learning is the best education model for students. Wearing masks, coupled with other measures, including getting vaccinated and following proper isolation and quarantine protocols, are key components to stopping the spread of the virus which gives students a greater chance of staying in school. I did not make this decision lightly. I wanted to provide you with a [link to statements](#) I have received from our local medical community. I have provided this to help you understand the basis for taking this action today.

Edmond Public Schools can't do this alone. We need your help! By uniting in this effort, we show our students the importance of taking action for the greater good - arguably one of life's most important lessons!

Thank you for your support at this difficult time. We are grateful to serve a community that is so supportive and passionate about education.

As a reminder, offices will be closed on Friday for staff professional development meetings. In addition, all schools and district offices will be closed Monday, September 6, in observance of Labor Day. Any Covid questions can be directed to our Covid email: Covid-19@edmondschools.net.

Sincerely,

Angela Grunewald

Superintendent