



Back-to-School 2021-2022

Q & A: Questions from public

1. Is there a plan for testing the unvaccinated, students, teachers, and staff, in Vestal to reduce the risk?

Response: We have received unconfirmed information from the Broome County Health Department and New York State that testing will be available to those who exhibit symptoms. Currently, the District is working with the Broome County Dept of Health on a testing plan in accordance with the NYSDOH guidelines.

2. What is the quarantine protocol?

Response: The local health departments, in consultation with local schools, will quarantine individuals that have had close contact with a positive COVID-19 case within a school setting or on a school bus. The quarantine duration is 10 days minimum and individuals must be symptom-free for 24 hours following that before returning to school/work.

3. What will contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation look like this upcoming year?

Response: Contact tracing will involve individuals in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case. Individuals will be quarantined if:

- exposed for longer than 15 minutes within a 24-hour period if physically distanced less than 3 feet with proper mask wearing. Additionally, individuals will be quarantined if
- masks are not worn (e.g., cafeteria) and physical distance is less than 6 feet from a positive COVID-19 case for longer than 15 minutes within a 24-hour period.
- masks are not worn properly (e.g., when an individual does not have a mask covering both mouth and nose) and physical distance is less than 6 feet from a positive COVID-19 case for longer than 15 minutes within a 24-hour period.

If a vaccinated individual is exposed to a positive COVID-19 case and symptom-free, the individual will not need to quarantine.

Positive case individuals will be isolated by the local and/or state health department.

4. What is the District's position on masking and 3-foot distancing for the upcoming school year? Will there be physical distancing?

Response: The NYS Department of Health has issued a regulation regarding face coverings for COVID-19 prevention. This mandate requires all students, staff, and visitors to wear a face covering while in school buildings, as well as on school buses. As expected, these regulations follow the CDC's recommendations.

Per CDC guidelines, students will be physically distanced from 3 to 6 feet in classrooms, where feasible.

5. Can the District require vaccinations of students and staff?

Response: At this time, school districts are not authorized to require that students or staff be vaccinated.

6. Can the District require individuals to provide proof of vaccinations?

Response: School districts do not have the authority to require individuals to show proof of vaccination. However, schools have the authority to ask students and staff if they are vaccinated when completing contact tracing in consultation with the local health departments.

Students and employees have the option to show proof of vaccination to avoid COVID testing requirements.

7. Is the District in compliance with air-handling regulations?

Response: District buildings have been inspected and it has been determined that all meet or exceed the minimum requirement of a Minimal Efficiency Resting Value (MERV) of 13. Filters are also being replaced ahead of their normal schedule.

8. Is the District required to follow the mask mandate put in place by the State?

Response: The school district has been directed to comply with a mask mandate by the New York State Department of Health, New York State Governor, and the State Education Department. As a state organization, we are obligated to follow this mandate. Currently, students and staff wear masks whenever they are in public school buildings or on school buses. This clearly is not a recommendation from New York State, but a requirement. Please understand that it is not a local decision. While our objective is to prevent a confrontational situation, unmasked individuals will be denied admission to school buildings and buses. We will make every effort to accommodate individual medical needs as long as an approved medical note is provided.

Knowingly refusing to wear a mask will create a difficult situation for all involved. During times like these, we hope that all partners will come together to agree on common ground. We all want our students in school and, to accomplish this, we must have students and staff wear face coverings. We are hopeful that everyone will understand the position in which NYS public schools find themselves and behave cooperatively in navigating this situation.