



# Parkland School District

## Health and Safety Plan Revision (8/19/2021)

Dear Parkland Families,

On July 27, 2021 the Parkland School District School Board approved the 2021-2022 Health and Safety Plan. As part of this plan, the School Board provided the Administration the ability to modify the plan as needed based upon the health, safety, and welfare of students, staff, and families. Unfortunately, COVID-19 case counts and community spread has been increasing as have the potential impact on children. Therefore, the following change has been made to the Health and Safety Plan and will go into effect on Monday, August 23, 2021:

*The Parkland School District will implement an **Indoor Face Coverings Decision Making Matrix**. This matrix is a leveled system that progresses from low-risk to high-risk. Based upon this matrix, Parkland School District is currently in Tier 3. Tier 3 represents the highest level of District concern for the spread of COVID-19. In Tier 3, all K-12 students, staff, and visitors are **required to wear face coverings, while indoors, regardless of vaccination status.***

**Indoor universal masking will thus be required starting on August 23, 2021.**



### Parkland School District Indoor Face Covering Decision Matrix

The Parkland School District has developed a decision-making tool in partnership with St. Luke's University Health Network and in consultation with Lehigh Valley Health Network. This evidence-based approach is designed to assist Parkland School District when a change may be needed to our face covering policy. Our goal is to have all schools remain open for five days a week of in-person instruction.

Indoor face covering requirements are a priority mitigation strategy across the tiers. Individual schools or the District may transition between tiers depending on the metrics set forth. Movement among tier levels will be considered after two consecutive weeks from the indicated change of the criteria. Immediate changes may be necessary as a result of outbreaks within a building.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
	<b>Guiding Metrics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>0-49 cases/100,000 residents in Lehigh County in a 7-day period &amp;/or</li> <li>0%-7.9% test positivity rate &amp;/or</li> <li>PSD student/staff cases less than 10 in a 10-day rolling window &amp;/or</li> <li>No evidence of community spread in school(s) &amp;/or</li> <li>High community and student/staff vaccination rates (60% and higher) *based upon entire population</li> </ul>	<b>Guiding Metrics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50-100 cases/100,000 residents in Lehigh County in a 7 day &amp;/or</li> <li>8-9.9% test positivity rate &amp;/or</li> <li>PSD student/staff cases less than 20 in a period 10 day rolling window &amp;/or</li> <li>No evidence of community spread in school(s) &amp;/or</li> <li>Moderate community and student/staff vaccination rates (40- 59.9%)*based upon entire population</li> </ul>	<b>Guiding Metrics:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100+ cases/100,000 residents in Lehigh County in a 7-day period &amp;/or</li> <li>≥ 10% test positivity rate &amp;/or</li> <li>PSD student/staff cases greater than 20 in a 10-day rolling window &amp;/or</li> <li>Evidence of community spread in school(s) &amp;/or</li> <li>Low community and student/staff vaccination rates (0-39.9%)*based upon entire population</li> </ul>
Students -Pre-K-8	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>
Students -9-12	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>
Students -Visual and Performing Arts -Athletics	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>
Faculty/Staff	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors when with students</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>
Nursing Suite(s)/Training Room(s)	<b>Required Indoors</b>	<b>Required indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>
Transportation	<b>Required per CDC/PDE order</b>		
Volunteers/Visitors	<b>Recommended Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>	<b>Required Indoors</b>

Parkland School District will continue to work with our local Healthcare Providers to determine decision making factors as well as on-going review of recommendations from Center for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC states: In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.



# Parkland School District

This was an extremely challenging decision. We did not want to create an open ended mandate that requires face coverings. The [Face Coverings Decision Making Matrix](#) provides Parkland School District with a strategy to loosen or tighten face covering restrictions as evidence of COVID-19 case counts and community spread ebbs and flows. This matrix provides clear indicators for the Administration to review on a regular basis to allow for the removal of face covering requirements when the data supports a safe change.

## Why Now?

This decision was made with full consideration of our community concerns about face coverings, our local health networks' guidance, and state and federal entity recommendations. We recognize that our community has differing opinions regarding the use of face coverings as a mitigation strategy. However, we are education experts, not health experts. And, in times like these, when our local health systems are pleading with us to require face coverings to get through this current COVID spike, we must listen to our health experts. We believe that this community wants to have schools open 5 days per week for in-person learning. We want that same thing. Our local health partners have told us that by requiring face coverings (to begin the school year), we stand our best chance at keeping students in classrooms and COVID out. In essence, masking reduces the chance that students would need to quarantine due to being identified as a "close contact" of an infected individual. This, in turn, reduces the chance for educational and programmatic disruptions.

## *Additionally:*

- *The recent changes in community spread for Lehigh County, utilizing both the CDC and the PA DOH dashboards, has been in the **High** spread consistently for the last two weeks.*
- *As of August 12, 14.4% of all COVID-19 cases are **now in children**, and for the week ending August 12, 18.0% of reported weekly COVID-19 cases were among children \*([American Pediatric Association](#)).*
- *Our local Pediatricians have reported a noticeable increase of cases in children.*
- *The recent data indicates more breakthrough cases are occurring in fully vaccinated individuals.*
- *Districts across the country are experiencing an increase in school closures just after opening due to outbreaks within their buildings.*
- *Our local Health Networks continue to promote the need for utilizing face coverings to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.*
- *Starting next week, in addition to athletes already on campus, all teachers will be reporting to their buildings for the start of year activities.*
- *The CDC has added an exception to the quarantine definition excluding children from quarantine who were within 3-6 feet of an infected case when both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks with other prevention strategies in place. This provides a greater likelihood of keeping students in the classroom after an exposure which in turn will limit disruptions in learning.*



# Parkland School District

This decision puts Parkland School District in the best position to keep all of our students, staff, and families safe while keeping our school buildings open five days per week for full-time instruction. District Administration, in consultation with our local health care providers will review our District data every two weeks at a minimum. Throughout the school year, changes **may be made** by building or by District depending on case counts, transmission levels, and trends.

## Next Steps

The District continues to use the following factors in our on-going decision making process:

- **Government Mandates and Legal Obligations**
  - Currently, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and Governor Wolf all **recommend** schools follow the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC.
- **Guidance from Local Medical Partners**
  - St. Luke's University Health Network **recommends** school districts implement UNIVERSAL FACE COVERINGS for the first 4-6 weeks of school.
  - Lehigh Valley Health Network **recommends** school districts implement UNIVERSAL FACE COVERINGS.
- **Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American Pediatrics Association (APA)**
  - The CDC and APA both **recommend** UNIVERSAL FACE COVERINGS for everyone (unvaccinated and vaccinated) in K-12 schools
- **Vaccination Rates (Community)**
  - Lehigh County
- **Local Community Transmission**
  - Lehigh County (Currently **HIGH** level of spread)
- **Building/District Cases**

The revised [Health and Safety Plan](#), [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) Building Plans, [Athletics](#) and [Arts](#) Plans along with other COVID related resources can all be accessed on the [Return to School 2021-2022](#) page of the District website (<https://www.parklandsd.org/schools/return-to-school>).

This decision does not come lightly. There was no way to please everyone in our community, as there is no one size fits all solution. However, please know that we have prioritized the health, safety, and wellbeing of our students and staff in making this challenging decision all while striving to open our schools for five days of in-person learning. We've heard from many of our families, students, and staff. We need to come together as a community for all of our students. Together, we can make this an outstanding school year.

Sincerely,

Parkland School District Administration