



August 31, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COVID-19 Mitigation Update

The Wausau School District is dedicated to advancing student learning, achievement, and success - by providing a safe and world-class educational experience for all of our students.

The Wausau School District is committed to engaging with the entire community to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 as well as other illnesses. **We will need effective communication between families, the District and the Marathon County Health Department to coordinate efforts and keep all citizens informed.**

The Wausau School District is currently engaged in virus mitigation strategies. While the Wausau School District always prioritizes clean air in our schools, we have upgraded our filtration to include MERV-13 filtration throughout the District. Further, in our classrooms, the air is exchanged several times per hour, and in many schools nearly 100% outdoor air is supplied when occupied.

Our maintenance and custodial staff take great pride in keeping our schools safe and clean. Cleaning will be completed once a day by custodial staff and if there is a positive case of COVID, the space will be cleaned AND disinfected by custodial staff.

During the 2021-22 school year, the Wausau School District will continue to work closely with the Marathon County Health Department - notifying them of any cases we learn about and providing any information they request to support their contact tracing efforts. We will also utilize the health department's expertise to analyze public health and District health data. Possible actions based on data analysis through the health department may include expanding physical distancing, cohorting elementary students, and changes to breakfast/lunch locations. Our masking practices may also be reviewed by our Board of Education.

The Wausau School District and Marathon County Health Department will freely share information both organizations need to make decisions and to keep our staff and families informed. The Marathon County Health Department will notify the District of any positive cases and they will also determine which people are close contacts and who needs to be quarantined and for what period of time. As we learn of positive cases, we will notify parents of cases in elementary classrooms and families of secondary students are encouraged to utilize the district dashboard, at any time, which will be placed on our website, wausauschools.org.

The Wausau School District is proud to offer free COVID testing to students presenting COVID symptoms. If a student comes to a school's health office with COVID symptoms, school health staff will contact the family to determine if they wish to have their child tested. The state Department of Health Services has an online portal developed to facilitate parent permission and confidential record keeping.

We understand COVID-19 and, specifically, masking policies are polarizing topics all around the world and it's no different in the Wausau community. Public health is a whole community effort. In fact, a petition that supports universal masking in our schools has been shared with the District. While we respect peoples' opinions, petitions are only one piece of information. We are unable to vet the source of signatures as to whether they are even our own residents. Further, we suspect, based on data last year, that if asked, a large majority of residents would support our staff's and parents' right to choose.

The district cannot effectively mitigate risk in isolation. We all have a part to play in keeping the community safe.

End of Release