



***The following is to be used for guidance as we transition to our next phase where masks are optional. Please note that adapting to change has been a part of our success in dealing with the COVID pandemic and will continue to be. However, our guiding principles remain the same:***

- 1. Keep students and staff safe***
- 2. Provide the best education possible***
- 3. Follow the guidance of the Whatcom County Health Department***

## **Masks**

**Q: Can I still wear a mask if I want to?**

A: Yes, you absolutely can wear a mask if you choose to do so, and so can all other staff, students, volunteers and visitors. *It is also important to note that no person should be called out, ridiculed, or otherwise discriminated against for their choice to wear or not wear a mask.*

**Q: Will there still be circumstances where people will have to wear masks?**

A: Yes. Masks will still be required when conducting COVID tests, supervising symptomatic people and performing other tasks related to medical procedures, or when there is increased risk of transmission. The use of well-fitting masks may be temporarily required for individuals by DOH and/or local public health (e.g., days 6-10 when a student, child, or staff returns from isolation after 5 days unless they have a negative test.) Masks may also be required universally during clusters and/or outbreaks in classrooms or with groups of students.

**Q: Will masks be required on buses?**

A: No. When the mask mandate for schools is lifted, it will be lifted for school buses, as well.

**Q: Some parents will want their children to wear masks and some will not. Whose job is it to enforce the parent's wishes?**

A: For young children, please let teachers know your wishes and they will do their best to reinforce them. Our educators will discuss the change with students in a developmentally appropriate manner, including how to respect others' personal choice. If your child(ren) expresses any anxiety, please feel free to reach out to our school counselors or psychologists for support.

**Q: Will masks still be provided at school sites?**

A: Yes, through the end of the school year procedure masks and a limited number of kn95 masks will be available.

**Q: Will masks still be required when returning after a positive test?**

A: If returning to school/care after day 5, the individual has three options:

- Wearing a well-fitted mask or face shield with a drape during days 6-10 of their isolation period is required, OR
- Test negative with an antigen or at-home test any day after day 5. Testing beyond day 10 is not necessary (A positive test will require the continuation of isolation through day 10).
- continue isolating through day 10.

## **General Safety**

**Q: What is the procedure for people who are exposed to a positive case of COVID?**

A: Regardless of vaccination status, students, children, and staff who were potentially exposed to COVID-19 should be encouraged to:

- Enter the test to stay protocol (strongly recommended),  
OR
- Monitor for symptoms, AND
- Consider wearing a well-fitted mask for 10 days after the last date of exposure, especially during activities like high-risk indoor sports, performing arts, etc., AND
- Get tested 3-5 days after their last exposure. If they test positive, they must isolate.
  - o For individuals who have been recently infected (within the past 90 days), antigen testing should be performed as PCR results may remain persistently positive and not be indicative of a new, active infection.

**Q: What happens if a student is symptomatic?**

A: Symptomatic students are required to stay home until their symptoms improve. In order to return symptoms must have ended or improved significantly and the person must have a negative COVID test. Preventing the spread of contagious diseases is a community responsibility.

**Q: Will we still be contact tracing?**

A: Yes. When a positive case on campus is known, we will continue our practice of determining whether others were potentially close contacts to the positive case.

**Q: Will we need to continue to have isolation rooms for symptomatic persons at school?**

A: Yes. Any student, child, or staff who reports or exhibits COVID-19-like symptoms is required to be immediately isolated from others, sent home, and referred to diagnostic testing as soon as feasible, regardless of vaccination status. While waiting to leave the school or program, the individual with symptoms is required to be isolated in a designated isolation space. They are required to wear a well-fitting face mask, if tolerated and age appropriate. Anyone providing care or evaluation to the isolated individual is required to wear appropriate PPE.

**Q: Will we still be notified of positive cases in our schools?**

A: Yes. Through the end of the year school staff and families will be notified via Parent Square when a known positive case has been on campus during their contagious stage or if there is a known outbreak. We will also continue to receive a daily update to remain transparent on the impact of the pandemic on our organization.

**Q: Will we still be performing COVID tests in our schools?**

A: We will continue to test at school in the following situations:

- Persons that were potentially exposed to COVID
- Persons in the Test to Stay protocol
- Persons returning after being symptomatic
- Persons with approved vaccine exemptions

**Q: What will the definition of a close contact be?**

A: This has not changed. The definition of a close contact in schools remains 3 feet for students in class and 6 feet for adults for approximately 15 minutes within 24 hours.

**Q: How will we know if there is an outbreak in a classroom? What will we do if there is?**

A: We will still be monitoring positive cases at our schools and be looking for patterns that suggest transmission at school. If there is a concerning pattern, mitigation strategies, including remote learning, will be considered following the advice of the WCHD.

**Q: What if there are multiple outbreaks in a school?**

A: Similar to the question about classrooms, if cases rise in a group of classrooms, we will consult with the WCHD to determine what mitigation measures should be taken and if in person learning or remote learning is warranted.

**Q: What do I do if I am at high risk for severe complications from COVID?**

A: Those at high risk for health problems from COVID-19 should consult with their health care provider when considering whether to provide or participate in PK-12 activities. Families should carefully consider risks and benefits of participating in in-person school.

For staff, if you are at high risk, you should be reaching out to your primary care physician to get advice. If a leave is required, please secure a note from your physician stating that working in an un-masked area is not safe for you to support that leave request.

**Q: What should I do if I am symptomatic?**

A: You should stay home and stay away from others. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is that our old habits of just working through illness and exposing others to our germs was not and is not the right thing to do. If your symptoms are COVID symptoms you should do a COVID test prior to returning.

Please do NOT send your child to school if they are showing any symptoms of illness. Please call your student's school and report the reason for their absence. Students who present with signs of illness or have a temperature of 100.4 F or higher will be sent home from school. An administrator, nurse, and/or office staff member will call the families to arrange immediate pick up of the sick child.

**Q: Have social distancing requirements for students changed?**

A: This is now a recommendation. It is recommended that everyone avoid being in overcrowded areas. This has been interpreted to be 3 feet in most situations.

**Q: Have social distancing requirements for staff changed?**

A: This is now a recommendation. It is recommended that everyone avoid being in overcrowded areas. This has been interpreted to be 6 feet in most situations.

**Q: Will isolation change for positive cases?**

A: No. A person who tests positive for COVID will still need to isolate for a minimum of five days and until their symptoms have resolved significantly prior to returning to work/school. (From days 6-10 a negative test OR mask OR continued isolation is required, as above)

**Q: Will "COVID Leave" still be available?**

A: Yes. We will continue to honor the amended agreement that we made for COVID leave in cases where it is applicable, *"for the duration of the 2021-2022 year or the end of the declared COVID state of emergency, whichever comes first."*

**Q: Is vaccination still a required term of employment and required for volunteers in Washington's schools.**

A: Yes. All employees and volunteers in educational settings are required to be fully vaccinated or have a medical or religious exemption per Governor's proclamation 21-14.3.

**Q: Will bus windows still need to be open?**

A: Yes. We will continue to increase ventilation on the bus by keeping at least 2 front and 2 rear windows open a few inches.

## **Instructional Considerations**

**Q: What will happen to our school schedules?**

A: School schedules are complicated. When you change one thing it changes several others. Schools will work to make changes when it is determined that the ramifications of changing outweigh the complications that it causes to do so. Please be patient with decision makers as these changes are carefully considered and well-planned.

**Q: Can we do small group instruction gathered around a table or on a carpet area?**

A: Yes, If overcrowding is avoided.

**Q: Will we be able to resume field trips?**

A: Yes, where field trips can meet the safety recommendations, we will be able to resume them. Planning of field trips should consider fall back and cancellation plans in case of a resurgence of the pandemic.

**Q: How will we provide instruction for quarantined students?**

A: There will still be some students who are quarantined and for that reason we will maintain the same support for these students that we have had through this school year.

**Q: Will PE go back to the way it was previously where it is primarily indoors?**

A: No. There is still a recommendation that PE be done outside when possible.

**Q: Will music still require students to wear masks while singing?**

A: No, they are not required. Distancing is recommended to the extent possible.

**Q: Will we be able to use volunteers?**

A: The use of volunteers has been in place for much of the school year already. Vaccination or exemption requirements are still in place for volunteers.

**Q: Will there be any changes to our attendance expectations?**

A: No

**Elementary:** NEW SECTION WAC 392-401A-015 Definition of absence from in-person learning.

(1) A student is absent from in-person learning when the student is:

- (a) Not physically present on school grounds; and
- (b) Not participating in the following activities at an approved location during a scheduled in-person learning day:
  - (i) Instruction;
  - (ii) Any instruction-related activity; or
  - (iii) Any other district- or school-approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district sponsored sports.

(2) A full day absence from in-person learning is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.

**Secondary:** NEW SECTION WAC 392-401A-015 Definition of absence from in-person learning:

(1) A student is absent from in-person learning when the student is:

- (a) Not physically present on school grounds; and
- (b) Not participating in the following activities at an approved location during a scheduled in-person learning day:
  - (i) Instruction;
  - (ii) Any instruction-related activity; or
  - (iii) Any other district- or school-approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district sponsored sports.

(2) A full day absence from in-person learning is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.

**Excusing Absences:**

Parents or guardians must notify their student's school with the reason for the absence within 48-hours

In remote learning, please report student absences by:

- o A telephone call to the main office before the absence or up to two days afterward
- o An email to the attendance secretary

We encourage parents or guardians to contact the school as soon as is reasonably possible when an absence is known. Absences may be excused for:

- o Illness
- o Chronic or extended health condition
- o Family emergency
- o Religious or cultural purposes
- o Parental approved activities
- o Disciplinary actions

Due to COVID-19, excusable absences include the following:

- o The student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19;
- o caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19;
- o the student's employment or other family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary due to COVID-19 until other arrangements can be made, including placement in a more flexible education program;
- o the student's parent or guardian's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made;

- o Other COVID-19 related circumstances as determined between school and parent/guardian or emancipated youth.

## Lunch

**Q: Will there still be free breakfast and lunches?**

A: Yes. The same program that has provided free meals during the pandemic extends through the end of this school year.

**Q: What will lunch look like? Will we still have to eat in classrooms?**

A: Social distancing should be maintained and overcrowding must be avoided. This likely will require the utilization of eating areas in addition to the cafeterias such as classrooms.

**Q: Can staff eat in the staffroom again?**

A: Social distancing should be maintained and overcrowding must be avoided. To the degree this can be accommodated, staff rooms can be used for lunches.

**Q: Can we use our water fountains again?**

A: There is not a restriction on use of water fountains in the current guidance.

## Recess

**Q: What will recess look like?**

A: Masks are not and will not be required. Since outside activities hold less risk than indoors, outdoor recess may function much like it did prior to the pandemic.

## Extracurriculars

**Q: What will this mean for athletics?**

A: Maximize ventilation of indoor space as much as possible. If a space is smaller and/or not well ventilated, consider moving the activity outdoors.

Athletes, coaches, athletic trainers and other support personnel should consider wearing masks when participating in indoor activities, especially high-risk indoor sports (e.g., basketball, wrestling, water polo, indoor cheer), where aerosolization may occur and the indoor space is not well ventilated; and should distance to the degree possible whenever not playing.

- The use of cohorts within the team limits the potential for team-wide transmission in the event of an exposure or outbreak and should be considered for practices, warm-ups, and when traveling.

**Q: What will this mean for performing arts?**

A: We will maximize distance between students to the degree possible during high-risk activities when increased exhalation or aerosolization occurs (e.g., singing or playing instruments, and cheering or shouting). These activities should be moved outdoors or to large, well-ventilated spaces whenever possible.

## Meetings

**Q: What are the distancing requirements for staff meetings or other meeting with adults?**

A: Social distancing should be maintained, and overcrowding must be avoided.

## Travel

**Q: Will we be able to do trips in the future with clubs, music groups and sports teams like in the past?**

A: In general, yes. However, all safety protocols will need to be followed and there will need to be contingency plans including refunds in case one is unable to travel due to one's own situation or if there is a resurgence in the pandemic.

**Q: Will we be able to travel for professional development again?**

A: Yes. As long as all safety protocols are followed and there will be a need to have contingency plans including refunds in case one is unable to travel due to one's own situation or if there is a resurgence in the pandemic.

## Unvaccinated Staff

**Q: Will people that are not vaccinated need to continue to wear masks?**

A: No. The lifting of the masking requirement does not differentiate between those who are vaccinated and those who are not.

**Q: Are we still testing staff members that are not vaccinated?**

A: With the reduction in case rates, screening testing for unvaccinated staff, substitutes and volunteers is being reduced to one time a week but may return to twice a week in the event of a resurgence in the pandemic.



## Environmental Concerns

**Q: What will we be doing for cleaning and disinfecting?**

A: FSD custodial staff have been trained in cleaning practices that meet infection control guidelines. (Cleaning for Healthier Schools - Infection Control Handbook) Custodial staff will be using certified cleaning products throughout our schools and paying special attention to disinfecting and sanitizing high touch areas and locations in our schools.

Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, faucet handles, check-in counters, drinking fountains, and restrooms. In general, cleaning once a day is enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Desks can be cleaned with soap and water.

**Q: What cleaning will we do following a symptomatic student?**

A: Transmission occurs in an airborne form; if a student exhibits signs of illness, that station should be cleaned prior to its next use.

**Q: Will we continue to ensure proper ventilation and air filtration in all classrooms?**

A: Yes. We will continue to use high quality filtration and to circulate air before, during and after the student day. If anyone does not believe that their space is being circulated as designed, they should reach out to their building custodian.

FSD has several strategies it's employing to increase the air exchange in our spaces. They include the following:

- Maximizing outside air settings as much as possible without drastically impacting thermal comfort.
- Open windows where possible and if the weather allows.
- Extend HVAC systems schedules to run before and after spaces are occupied to increase air movement (2-hours before and 2-hours after school starts and ends).
- If the outside air ratio is controlled by a CO2 sensor, reduce the CO2 setting to increase the amount of outside air brought into the room.
- Use the highest rated filter compatible with the existing filter rack that doesn't impact system performance.