

FORT THOMAS

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

HIGHLANDS HIGH

HIGHLANDS MIDDLE

JOHNSON ELEMENTARY

MOYER ELEMENTARY

WOODFILL ELEMENTARY

Rich in Tradition Focused on the Future

November 22, 2021

Fort Thomas Independent Schools Family,

It is difficult to put into words how proud we are of the efforts our students, families, and educators have demonstrated to overcome the challenges and continue to thrive these past two years. From day one, our teams have followed the values of maximizing the number of students who can safely attend school in person five days a week and reducing distractions to the educational process. We have implemented a protocol that allows us to avoid revisiting the often divisive practice of reevaluating our masking decisions each week. As we look ahead, this communication is to provide clarity for our return to schools in the second semester and to allow families to prepare accordingly.

Effective January 3, 2022, the Fort Thomas Independent Schools will support the decision for all students, faculty, staff, and community members to wear face coverings but will consider the choice to do so **optional**. In compliance with the federal mandate, face coverings will continue to be required for all students while riding a bus. Preschool students will continue to wear face masks while indoors, as this is consistent with our access to vaccination rationale.

Our decision is in response to the three primary factors we have continued to monitor: 1) rate of positive cases within the 41075 zip code; 2) number of active positive cases for those attending our schools each day; and 3) the ability for any member of our school community to access a vaccine should they choose to do so. Based on the collaboration of our school health professionals, we are confident we can take this next step in close partnership with our families. Local rates of infection have become more manageable at the school level and, most importantly, all families are now able to make the optional choice to be fully vaccinated prior to the return of school following the Winter Break. We are offering optional COVID vaccine clinics for students ages 5 and up on November 23 and December 14. It is important to note that each of our schools will continue reasonable measures to minimize exposure. To do so, school leadership will continue to monitor local trends, often specific to their school, and make adjustments to exposure through continued sanitation and possible adjustments to large gatherings as warranted. We ask for your continued support.


From the beginning, we have seen household spread occur when a person in the home is positive for COVID. With this in mind, we will continue the requirement to maintain isolation for positive individuals and require quarantine of those who reside in the same household.

FTIS will adjust contact tracing processes which will change quarantine protocol related to asymptomatic students. Beginning January 3, we will start the practice of notifying families by email when a student is potentially in close contact with a person while at school who tested positive so that families may closely monitor for symptoms. Nurses will no longer make individual calls to investigate close contacts related to a positive case while at school. Students without symptoms will not be quarantined and will be permitted to fully participate in school activities. We recommend, but will not require, these students to use face coverings. This approach will be similar to other infectious diseases that require close monitoring after a potential exposure. School staff will continue to monitor for symptoms and ask families to support our request for families to seek medical opinion for even minor illness. Our change to close contact quarantine practices can only be successful if families are diligent in monitoring for symptoms and choosing to **keep symptomatic individuals at home** until a negative test result or alternate diagnosis is obtained.

During this transition, we will regularly monitor public health trends and metrics, and we will only return to previous protocol should there be a dramatic change in local conditions. In consultation with school health officials, we will return to universal face coverings should we be required to do so by state or local health officials or if conditions are so severe that our ability to maximize regular in-person attendance requires a change. We value our partnership with our families. Our continued ability to follow this approach is dependent on the commitment to regular hand washing, sanitation, and for all symptomatic persons (even minor symptoms) **remaining home** until certain that infection cannot be spread. As full partners in this process, the District will continue to offer COVID testing options.

We are better together! I am so proud of the Fort Thomas family for both the patience displayed and the pursuit of excellence as we move another step forward toward normalcy. Please continue to visit our [Healthy at School](#) webpage for updates and a more succinct description of changes to our protocol for the second semester. As always, please reach out if you have questions that can be addressed.

Respectfully,



Brian Robinson
Superintendent