



## Staff message on COVID protocols

### March 9, 2022

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Good afternoon staff,

Last week we announced that starting March 12, masks will become optional at all Everett Public Schools, and we were waiting for the Department of Health (DOH) to update their guidance before announcing any further changes.

DOH released their [K-12 guidance](#) yesterday, and the information is outlined below. There are a few pieces DOH has pending to be released by end of day Friday, which we will share when available.

#### **Employee Vaccination**

Employees are still required to be fully vaccinated or have a medical or religious exemption. If you are not fully vaccinated you must follow the previous guidance from Human Resources, which includes wearing a mask as part of the accommodation.

#### **Masking**

Beginning March 12, face masks will no longer be required in Everett Public Schools or on school buses. Masks are optional, so you can continue to wear a mask if you wish.

There are several **situations for schools that will continue to require masking**:

- If you are an employee who is not vaccinated and have an exemption through Human Resources, you must continue to wear a mask as this is related to the vaccine requirement for employment, not the state masking mandate.
- Masks are required in the nurse, health and CARE (isolation) rooms, as these areas are considered health care settings.
- While masks are no longer required universally in the school setting, there may be situations when the use of a mask may be temporarily required for individuals by the DOH, local public health or L&I.

Recommended but not required masking includes:

- If someone who was **COVID-positive** is returning to work, school or other public settings after a 5-day isolation period, it is recommended they wear well-fitting mask for days 6-10 after their symptom onset or positive test result.
- **Athletics:** Athletes, coaches, athletic trainers and other support personnel should consider wearing masks when participating in indoor activities, especially high-risk indoor sports.
- **Performing Arts:** High aerosol-producing performers [e.g., singers, woodwinds and brass, speech/debate, dance (competitive and dance squads) and theatre performers] should consider wearing appropriate masks and/or use appropriate bell covers while practicing and/or performing.

Please help our students understand that we are to respect individual choices, assumptions should not be made about personal beliefs or health status and bullying about masks will not be tolerated.

### **Symptoms of COVID**

Students, children and staff who have [symptoms](#) of COVID are required to stay home. The flow chart on when to return to school is being updated by DOH and will be available by the end of the week.

### **Positive COVID cases**

A student, child or staff who tests positive for COVID is required to isolate, regardless of vaccination status. The individual may return to school after 5 full days of isolation if:

- Their [symptoms](#) have improved, or they have no symptoms, **AND**
- They are without a fever for the past 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

If returning to school after day 5, the individual is strongly recommended to wear a well-fitted mask for days 6-10 or to get a negative test any day after day 5 before day 10. This is recommended, but not required.

### **Positive COVID cases at school**

If a student or staff exhibit COVID-like symptoms at school, the same processes in place now will continue, which means they will be immediately isolated from others. The student will be taken to the CARE room and their family called. Staff will talk with their administrator or supervisor and will need to go home.

Any student who is identified as immunocompromised, medically fragile or otherwise at high risk for severe COVID must be notified of any potential exposure at school. Staff will be notified of potential exposures by the district's COVID team. Additionally, all staff and families will be kept informed of cases and outbreaks via the weekly [COVID dashboard](#) or a potential "group" email in the case of an outbreak. There will be no more formal contact tracing.

### **COVID exposure**

Exposed students, children and staff may continue to take part in all in-person instruction and care, including sports, performing arts and other extracurricular activities, as long as they are not symptomatic. If an exposed student, child or staff develops symptoms, they are **required** to immediately isolate at home following the protocols outlined in the DOH flowchart to be released Friday.

Regardless of vaccination status, students, children and staff who were potentially exposed to COVID are encouraged (but not required) to:

- Monitor for symptoms, **AND**
- Consider wearing a well-fitted mask (if age appropriate) 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. Molecular (PCR/NAAT), antigen and at home tests are acceptable. If they test positive, they must isolate.

### **COVID case reporting**

All positive cases of COVID should continue to be reported to the district's COVID team at 425-385-4299. They will contact any student or staff who meet notification requirements set by DOH or

local public health. They will also ensure COVID cases are reported on the dashboard and to the Snohomish Health District.

### **COVID testing**

We will ensure all staff and students have access to testing. This may include expanding our testing program to include not only close contacts, but those who are experiencing symptoms related to COVID. More details to come as the guidelines and availability of testing onsite are explored.

### **Social distancing**

The requirement for social distancing in schools has moved from the required section to the “additional considerations” section, meaning it is a good mitigation strategy, but no longer required in schools.

### **Other mitigations**

Other ongoing recommendations that are effective to slow the spread of COVID are to encourage hand washing, cleaning high-touch surfaces, keeping two front and two rear windows in buses open and providing good ventilation.

We will be sending a similar message to families later today, which is attached for your reference.

These are big changes for our staff and students and while some may welcome the change, it may cause anxiety in others. Please be extra sensitive to our students and colleagues’ needs during this transition. Thank you for all you do.

Stay safe and be well

Dr. Ian B. Saltzman