



Holmes, Donna <dholmes@palisadesd.org>

Community Message October 14, 2021

1 message

Dr. Bridget O'Connell <superintendent@palisadesd.org>

Thu, Oct 14, 2021 at 4:00 PM

Reply-To: dholmes@palisadesd.org

To: dholmes@palisadesd.org

Dear Palisades Community,

Last week the Board approved a revised [Health and Safety Plan](#) with updates in the following sections:

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State and local health departments

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities

The purpose of this communication is to provide you with updates in each section.

Section A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

The updated language in this section complies with the universal mask [order](#) issued by the Acting Secretary of Health that went into effect on September 7, 2021. In addition to the order, the Pennsylvania Department of Education issued [FAQs](#) regarding masking in schools.

During last week's Board discussion, issues emerged regarding masking, which were not specifically defined in the Health and Safety plan, including masking during physical education (PE) class, student masking breaks, and masking of employees when alone. Please see the following FAQs regarding those topics.

What is the protocol for mask wearing during PE classes:

- During the warmer weather, PE classes will be held outdoors when possible so students do not need to wear masks.
- When inside, increased air flow in the gymnasiums in our buildings has been addressed. Additional fans have been purchased and dampers on the HVAC units are opened more fully depending on outside weather conditions.
- Students wear masks at the beginning of PE classes until they start a warm up during which they are spaced more than 6' apart. At this point, masks are off (like a typical masking break). Students then head outside, when possible, and masks can be removed. If they must remain indoors, students put their masks on because most PE activities involve student interaction during which maintaining a 6' distance is not possible. If a student indicates they need a mask break due to their exertion level, the PE teacher will allow the student to move away from all others in the class, remove their mask for a mask break, and re-enter the activity with a mask on when ready.

What is the protocol for student mask breaks? [Mask Break Attachment](#)

What is the protocol for employees to remove their masks when working alone? [Employee Masking Protocol When Working Alone](#)

In addition to the Board questions regarding masking, I wanted to highlight the second part of this section specific to correct wearing of masks. According to The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Bucks County

Department of Health, masks must fit snugly against the sides of the face and completely cover the mouth and nose. Masks that have exhalation valves or are made of mesh material are not permitted unless it is layered on top of a cloth or disposable mask.

See examples of the mesh masks below:



For more information about the proper way to wear and care for masks, please click on this link for [CDC Masking Guidance](#)

Section E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine in collaboration with the State and local health departments

At Palisades, we are following the Bucks County Department of Health guidelines for close contact scenarios first issued on August 27, 2021. I have recently confirmed that the protocols described below are still in place from the DOH.

The guidelines for exclusion are as follows:

1. Student distance is between 3' - 6' for more than 15 minutes. If both parties are masked, no close contact is determined, thus no quarantine is required.
2. Student distance is less than 3' for more than 15 minutes (regardless of masking). A 10 day quarantine or 7 day quarantine with 5 day negative COVID test is required.
3. If students are less than 6' for more than 15 minutes (if one or both of the parties are not masked) a 10 day quarantine or 7 day quarantine with 5 day negative COVID test is required.
4. Regardless of distance and duration, if the exposed person is vaccinated AND not showing symptoms, no quarantine is required. If proof of vaccination is not shared, 10 day quarantine or 7 day quarantine with 5 day negative COVID test. As long as the student is asymptomatic, they will not be excluded from school.

Any questions regarding a specific instance should be directed to your school's building nurse.

Please see the attachment regarding procedures to support students on an extended (4 or more days) excused absence. [Extendend absence procedure 2021 2022 \(1\).pdf](#)

Section F. Diagnostic and screening testing

This section was clarified to include language that a school nurse will advise parents/guardians how to obtain a COVID test and that no student will be tested without parental permission. Please see the attached flyer for information regarding a county COVID testing site. [COVID TEST REV.PNG](#)

Section G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities

This section was clarified to include language that no vaccines will be administered without parent permission. Since vaccines have become available, Palisades has hosted 4 vaccine clinics in partnership with AMI. We are prepared to once again run in-school and after school vaccine clinics when the COVID vaccine for 5-11 year olds is approved.

Finally, I wanted to reiterate that our district's COVID Dashboard has been reinstated for this school year. It will be continually updated as new student cases are reported and contacts, if any, have been notified. Please click [here](#) for the most updated information.

Thank you for your continued support of our students, staff and administration as we navigate through the new school year. I am confident that working together we will continue to provide the best education possible for all of our students and enjoy their development as lifelong learners.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget O'Connell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Bridget O'Connell

Superintendent

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