



February 17, 2022

Dear General McLane Families, Staff, and Faculty:

From the start of this school year, we have worked tirelessly to keep our schools open and provide daily in-person instruction in a safe learning and working environment for our students and staff. This goal has been a unifying element in a year that has challenged our community as COVID has impacted our lives in different yet shared ways. These efforts have been consistent since day one. There are some things about our current context that are much different than life in August when it comes to COVID.

- Vaccination is available to nearly everyone age 5+.
- We know now that the omicron variant is significantly less dangerous and poses little risk for children/students, even the unvaccinated.
- We have an optional testing program in place.
- We have seen a dramatic decrease in case counts both in buildings and across the district that mirrors regional trends.
- We know the superior effectiveness of N95 masks and can make them available to students and staff upon request.
- The combination of background immunity (of varying degrees) in the community, a less severe virus (for children and vaccinated), and a virus peaked and declining is our new context.

I do not in any way want to diminish the epidemiological health concerns for students. We are at the point now, however, where students' other needs surpasses the threat to their epidemiological health.

With all of these factors as context and per the recommendation of our pandemic coordinator and me, the school board voted to update the GMSD Health and Safety Plan and begin a mask-optional policy on **Monday, February 28**.

Students/Families and staff have the option to choose whether or how masking meets their needs. Upon request, there are N95 masks available in buildings for students and staff.

### **Isolation/Quarantine Guidelines**

On February 28, the district will also be updating our quarantine guidelines. In conjunction with [PA School Code, Title 28, Chapter 27, Subchapter C: Quarantine and Isolation](#), the district will work with Erie County Department of Health to conduct COVID-19 investigations as needed.

### **Household close contacts continue to follow ECDOH guidelines.**

- Vaccinated household close contacts do not require quarantine as long as they remain asymptomatic. It is recommended to test on day 5 and wear a mask the full 10 days.

- Unvaccinated household close contacts are required to quarantine for 10 days to monitor for symptoms. Household contacts can return to school on day 11 as long as they remain asymptomatic during their quarantine.
  - Symptomatic household close contacts, regardless of vaccination status, will quarantine for 5 days from the onset of symptom date (Symptom start date is considered Day 0). Test if possible. They may return to school/work on day 6, as long as they are asymptomatic and fever free over 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications) with additional masking through day 10.

**Symptomatic students/staff, regardless of vaccination status, will continue to visit the school Nurse to be evaluated and devise a next steps plan.**

- Upon evaluation, dependent on each individual case and symptoms presented, students/staff may be eligible to remain in school if consented/enrolled in the TTS program or they may be sent home and advised to schedule a PCR test.
  - Symptomatic cases sent home will complete a 5-day quarantine from onset of symptom date. (Symptoms start date is considered Day 0.) Test if possible. They may return on day 6 as long as they are asymptomatic and fever free over 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications) with additional masking through Day 10. If they present a negative confirmed lab PCR test, they may be eligible to return early at the discretion of the Pandemic team once result is reviewed.

**Close contacts to positive confirmed cases in school:**

- Close contacts to a positive case will be notified via Pandemic Team.
- Letters will be sent home with students upon identification of a confirmed case. Letters will indicate date of exposure to the positive . Asymptomatic students will no longer be required to quarantine and can utilize TTS program if enrolled.
- The district recommends that the close contacts notified, monitor for symptoms carefully, test on day 5 if possible, and mask for the 10 days following exposure to the positive case. If students/staff become symptomatic, please notify the Pandemic Team for further direction.

All students will be required to continue to wear a well-fitting mask in the Nurses office [as well as on the buses per federal regulations](#) until that masking requirement is rescinded.

Thank you for your continued support through the challenges of this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Matt Lane, Ed.D.  
General McLane School District – Superintendent