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As Minerva Central School plans for the 2021-2022 school year, we will continue to utilize the health and safety guidelines in the District Reopening Plan. MCS will utilize flexible planning to adjust to the changing circumstances in viral contagion, vaccination, county, state, and federal guidance. Data and guidance provided by the Center for Disease Control will continue to inform the decision-making for the Board.

## Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools

Updated Aug. 5, 2021

### Key Takeaways

1. Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall of 2021 is a priority.
2. Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
3. Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, CDC recommends universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
4. In addition to universal indoor masking, CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully reopen while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as screening testing.
5. Screening, testing, ventilation, handwashing, respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important prevention layers.... to keep schools safe.
6. Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
7. Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning.
8. Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

## Summary of Recent Changes

Updates as of August 4, 2021

- Updated to recommend universal indoor masking for all students, staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.
- Added recommendation for fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, regardless of whether they have symptoms.

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Key Changes for Minerva Central School

**(please note subject to change based on additional official guidance and regional transmission rates)**

**Masking:<sup>1</sup>**

- Masks must be worn by all staff, students, and visitors (regardless of vaccination status) inside the school and on school transportation<sup>2</sup>
  - Masks breaks will be given (when social distancing is possible or assigned by teacher)
  - Masks do not need to be worn while eating
  - Masks are not required for outside classrooms/outside activities unless a physical distance of 3-feet can not be properly maintained

**Physical Distancing:**

- The guidance for students and staff is to remain at least 3-feet apart when possible<sup>3</sup>
  - 3-foot social distancing is not required on school transportation
  - Distancing in the cafeteria should be 3-feet when possible
- When students are socially distanced and not moving then their masks may be removed (depending on level of transmission)

**Transportation:**

- MCS will return to normal bus run schedules for all interested families and students.
- Students will be asked to Social Distance to the degree possible<sup>4</sup>
  - Due to Federal Regulations, masks must be worn at all times on school transportation.
  - Students will be assigned seats
- Each family will be asked to inform the district of their transportation preferences.
  - These preferences can only be changed at the end of the semester

**Remote Learning:**

- A remote or virtual learning option will not be offered to students at MCS<sup>5</sup>.
- Should the school/area be closed by state or county action, or the School Board acts to close the building for a time, students will all receive remote learning support
- If a student is put on quarantine then they will receive educational support via:
  - The student will be provided work via paper and/or Google Classroom
  - The teacher will hold a virtual meeting(s) with the student to check in on progress

**Daily Screening:<sup>6</sup>**

- MCS will continue its daily screening using Pinpoint.
  - K-6 students will enter the normal front door
  - 7-12 students will enter the door down by the business office

**Athletics:<sup>7</sup>**

- Outdoor sports do not require masking
- Inside sports require masking
- Spectators are required to mask at all indoor events

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<sup>1</sup> The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status and community transmission levels.

<sup>2</sup> “[a]ll passengers on public conveyances ... traveling into, within, or out of the United States ... regardless of their vaccination status, are required to wear a mask over their nose and mouth.”

<sup>3</sup> CDC recommends that schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance

<sup>4</sup> Pursuant to the CDC's Order, physical distancing is not required on school buses

<sup>5</sup> Schools should be open for in-person teaching and learning, and students should be in school.

<sup>6</sup> CDC no longer recommends temperature screenings or screening questionnaires at school.

<sup>7</sup> Masks are recommended for school events and athletics while indoors

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- Spectators should observe 3-feet physical distancing when practical.

### **COVID-19 Testing at school, isolation, and quarantine**<sup>89</sup>

- As required by the county or state health department.
- Quarantine procedures will be:
  - Quarantine guidelines will be 6-feet and an exposure of a cumulative 15-minutes over a 24-hour period.
  - An exception for **students only** who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time then the uninfected student will not be quarantined. Additional guidance for wearing masks is available from the CDC
  - Individuals who are fully vaccinated **do not** need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms
    - Fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they do not have symptoms, and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.
- In a layered intervention approach, MCS may make use of random testing during substantial and high transmission rates
- Quarantine status continues to be monitored by the Essex County Department of Health
- The Essex County Department of Health's quarantine plan is subject to change.

### **Breakfast:**

- Secondary (7-12) students will go to the cafeteria and have breakfast from 7:45 AM - 7:55 AM.
  - If a student does not want to eat breakfast, then they will go to their first-period class.
  - Students must sit in their assigned seats.
- Students in grades 3-6 will grab their breakfast in the cafeteria and return to their classroom to eat.
- Students in grades K-2 will go to the cafeteria and have breakfast from 8:00 AM - 8:15 AM.
  - Students must sit in their assigned seats.

### **Lunch:**

- Students will go through the lunch/cafeteria line
- Locations are still being determined.
  - Will be in the lunchroom and other locations

### **School Between-Periods Transitions:**

- Secondary (7-12) students will transition from classroom to classroom.
- Students will be given a locker
  - Locker use is optional
  - Lockers will be (as best possible) every other spaced.

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<sup>8</sup> The CDC guidance document defines a close contact as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). Exception: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. Additional guidance for wearing masks is available from the CDC. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

<sup>9</sup> According to the CDC, people who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they do not have symptoms, and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.

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**Physical Education**

- MCS physical education physical distancing is as follows:
  - If students are participating indoors and more than 3-feet apart then masks do not need to be worn
  - If students are participating indoors and can not maintain a physical distance of 3-feet then masks must be worn
  - If students are participating outdoors and can not properly maintain a physical distance of 3-feet then masks must be worn.
- Until further notice, there will be no use of locker rooms this year

**Isolation room (if needed)**

- The boy's locker room will be used as an isolation room if needed
  - This locker room has a bathroom, sink, and a cot will be placed there as per guidance.

**Vaccination**

- CDC recommends that all eligible teachers, faculty, staff, and students be vaccinated as soon as possible.
- NYSED recommends that schools retain vaccination information for students and staff, and make layered approach decisions appropriate to the current transmission rates.<sup>10</sup>

**Cleaning and sanitizing procedures:**

- MCS will continue to follow our cleaning and sanitizing protocols from 2020-2021<sup>11</sup>

While the District will not be involved in establishing county or area transmission rates, the thresholds below will be used as a tool to determine action by viral contagion rate.

**CDC Transmission Thresholds:**

Indicator (if different, the higher level is selected)	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Red
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past seven days	0 - 9.99	10 - 49.99	50 - 99.99	≥100
Percentage of NAATs <sup>1</sup> that are positive during the past seven days	0 - 4.99%	5 - 7.99%	8 - 9.99%	≥10.0%

<sup>10</sup> This document emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (i.e., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households.

<sup>11</sup> The CDC encourages cleaning school buildings and school buses at least once a day to sufficiently remove any germs that may be on surfaces.

## Layered Prevention Approach

These guidelines are subject to change based on updates from the CDC and local data. The areas that have the designation TBD contain some suggestions for implementation that will require more information before using.

Layered Prevention Strategies	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Red
Distancing	3 Feet	3 Feet	3 Feet	3 Feet
Indoor Masks	Masked, with breaks at the desk. Required in all public shared areas	Masked, with breaks at the desk. Required in all public shared areas	Required - As informed by CDC Guidelines yet to be provided for the delta variant	Required - As informed by CDC Guidelines yet to be provided for the delta variant
Outdoor Masks	No	No	No	TBD
Bus Masks with regular seating, 2 per seat	Required	Required	Required	Required
Daily Screening	Required by anyone entering the building	Required by anyone entering the building	Required by anyone entering the building	Required by anyone entering the building
If there is a need and the ability for Testing, these are suggested areas.	Will screen daily; will test using county DoH guidelines	Will screen daily; will test using county DoH guidelines	Will screen daily; will test using county DoH guidelines	Will screen daily; will test using county DoH guidelines
If there is a need and the ability for Screening Testing, these are the suggestions for High-Risk Athletics Testing- TBD	No	No	Test all participants once per week - TBD	Test all participants twice per week- TBD - if sports practice and games are allowed due to safety considerations
Handwashing, hand sanitizer, and respiratory etiquette	Continuing with the same procedure as we did in 2020-2021	Continuing with the same procedure as we did in 2020-2021	Continuing with the same procedure as we did in 2020-2021	Continuing with the same procedure as we did in 2020-2021
Other -				

CDC recommends that all teachers, staff, and eligible students be vaccinated as soon as possible. However, schools have a mixed population of both people who are fully vaccinated and people who are not fully vaccinated. Elementary schools primarily serve children under 12 years of age who are not eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine at this time. Other schools (e.g., middle schools, K-8 schools) may also have students who are not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Some schools (e.g., high schools) may have a low percentage of students and staff fully vaccinated despite vaccine eligibility. These variations require K-12 administrators to make decisions about the use of COVID-19 prevention strategies in their schools and are reasons why the

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CDC recommends universal indoor masking regardless of vaccination status at all levels of community transmission.

Together with local public health officials, school administrators should consider multiple factors when they make decisions about implementing layered prevention strategies against COVID-19. Since schools typically serve their surrounding communities, decisions should be based on the school population, families and students served, as well as their communities. The primary factors to consider include:

- Level of [community transmission](#) of COVID-19.
- [COVID-19 vaccination coverage](#) in the community and among students, teachers, and staff.
- Strain on health system capacity for the community.
- Use of a frequent SARS-CoV-2 screening testing program for students, teachers, and staff who are not fully vaccinated. Testing provides an important layer of prevention, particularly in areas with substantial to high community transmission levels.
- COVID-19 outbreaks or increasing trends in the school or surrounding community.
- Ages of children served by K-12 schools and the associated social and behavioral factors that may affect risk of transmission and the feasibility of different prevention strategies.

### **Bibliography**

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