

# Olmsted Falls City School District

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Dear Bulldog Families,

I hope that you're enjoying the summer with friends and family. I am writing to provide you with an update related to the 2021-2022 school year. This communication contains information on:

1. How the district will conduct school for the 2021-2022 school year.
2. How the district will proceed with masks at the start of the school year.
3. How the district will proceed with COVID19 exposures.

I apologize for the length of this communication, however the issues before us are complex and we want to fully communicate with you so that you can make the best decision for your students. In order to allow you to more efficiently get the information, it is presented in a Q&A format. We will continue to email families directly when changes occur, as well as post the most current updated information on the district's website as the situation evolves. You should not rely on social media for your information. Come to us directly with questions.

### ***What is the format the district will use for school for the 2021-2022 school year?***

The district intends to begin the school year with in-person school, 5-days per week. Parents should know that it will take something very significant to have us change this course.

Students will not be able to remotely access live instruction within Olmsted Falls classrooms. This will not be an option during the school year or during any quarantine period. For families not comfortable with our instructional approach or guidelines, there is an online school option for those wishing to pursue this route for their students and it has already been presented to parents.

### ***What is the District's facial covering procedure (the quick answer)?***

The district believes that students who are at the age where a vaccine is unavailable, wearing a mask is one of the best ways to provide a layer of mitigation to prevent the spread of COVID19. The district recognizes that the data show that, in general, COVID19 does not present itself as a significant health risk for students aged 18 and under who do not have preexisting conditions.

Because a vaccine is not available for students under the age of 12, masks will be required, however parents have the option to "opt out" of this if they provide the district with written notice that they are making this decision for their student. Prior to the start of school, the district will electronically distribute

a Google Form to allow us to account for which parents have chosen to opt out of mask wearing for students under the age of 12. Masks are optional for individuals 12+ as there is a vaccine available.

Parents should know that regardless of age or vaccination status, ***ALL*** students using district transportation ***will continue to be required to wear a mask on bus entry, during the ride and exiting the vehicle unless the student has a documented medical exemption.*** This is required by Federal Law.

The Ohio Department of Health, and other health care professionals “strongly recommend mask wearing for vaccinated and unvaccinated persons.” Masks work to prevent the spread of COVID19. Parents should know that at this time masks are optional for all OFCS staff members. ***This is subject to change based on the weekly data that we receive.*** For more information about masking along with approved and pending Ohio legislation, please go to the last page of this letter.

***Will the district change its facial covering procedure during the year?***

Possibly. The district will use local and regional data, and will consider the recommendations from the Cuyahoga County Board of Health to assist with decision making. Should the spread of COVID19 reach a level deemed necessary to require additional COVID19 mitigation as determined by the superintendent or school board, the district may require masking for all students and staff. We certainly hope that this does not transpire. As I write this communication, our local and regional COVID metrics remain low when compared to previous levels, however the data is starting to trend in a negative manner. Should you care to track this data yourself, you can go to this website:  
<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

***How will the district handle quarantining?***

The quarantine rules for the 2020-2021 school year were driven by orders from the Governor, the Ohio Department of Health and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. Recent legislation has put significant limits on the abilities of these organizations to govern quarantine/isolation. We have been advised this year that the State of Ohio will oversee quarantine procedures and data. Due to this fact, it is important for families to clearly understand what will happen should a COVID19 exposure occur with and without the presence of mitigation methods like masks and vaccines because it will impact the student’s access to in-person school during the quarantine period.

When a facial covering is worn, the quarantine rules for those masked are more favorable than for those unmasked. As a result, masks will help to keep both staff and students in school.

Quarantine Guidelines for OFCS Students:

- If a fully vaccinated and masked student is exposed to a person suspected of having COVID19, the student can continue to attend school and will need to monitor symptoms.
- If a fully vaccinated and unmasked student is exposed to a person suspected of having COVID19, the student can continue to attend school and will need to monitor symptoms.
- If an unvaccinated and masked student is exposed to a person suspected of having COVID19, the student can continue to attend school and will need to monitor symptoms.

- If an unvaccinated and unmasked student is exposed to a person suspected of having COVID19, the student **must** be quarantined for 14 days. The student and parents should work with the student's teachers to gather all assignments and work during the time that the quarantine occurs.

In closing, parents should be aware that we are required to submit a *Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan* to the Ohio Department of Education, and update it throughout the school year. You may access that plan online at this link <https://www.ofcs.net/Content2/ofcs-reopening>. The plan has the district's mitigation strategies outlined and how we plan to address both academic and non-academic services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jim Lloyd, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

#### More Details on Masking If You Care to Read

Masking is something that has continued to be a controversial topic as demonstrated by the passage of Ohio House Bill 244 and Ohio Senate Bill 22. Masking was a layer of mitigation widely adopted by schools last year and it was required. Ohio's Legislators have put laws into place to limit the government's decision making authority during a state of emergency. The new legislation is likely to be taken to court and in the meantime, superintendents and boards of education are left with the challenge of figuring it out as people debate in the courts. Last year it was necessary for schools to implement the practice of masking during the height of COVID19 spread. Several things have changed since then. A vaccine has been introduced, the elderly population is significantly vaccinated, and the data demonstrate that those who do not qualify to be vaccinated do not suffer significant symptoms if they contract COVID19.

#### Ohio House Bill 244 (the "masking bill")

As indicated, facial coverings have become a political issue as demonstrated by the action taken by Ohio's Legislators. Ohio House Bill 244 goes into effect in early October, but the district will operate as if it is in effect at the start of the school year in order to be consistent. Not all school districts have taken this approach. HB 244 does two things: 1) it prohibits districts from requiring an individual to get a vaccine that hasn't received full approval from the FDA and 2) prohibits public schools from instituting a facial covering policy that differentiates between the vaccinated and unvaccinated. The requirements will be "masks for all" or "masks for none." Based on reports that I've heard, the Pfizer vaccine is scheduled to receive full FDA approval in September or October. This law has created significant conversations amongst the area superintendents and we have been sharing what our likely policies are for the start of the 2021-2022 school year. With the exception of two districts, as of now, 27 out of 29 districts in our county will have masks as optional.

#### Ohio Senate Bill 22 (the "limited power bill")

There are many limits that this law puts on the Governor's ability to respond to a state of emergency. The intent was to limit the Governor's power during a pandemic. The law also limits the authority of local boards of health and impacts the quarantine and isolation orders that may be issued by them, but not by the local school district. This complicates matters for school districts because we are not medical professionals and rely on the local board of health to tell us how to implement quarantines.