

Olmsted Falls City School District

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Dear Bulldog Families,

I am writing to provide you with an important update related to a mask requirement going into effect. The district's optional mask recommendation was short-lived, and while personally gut wrenching for me; a mask requirement is necessary at this time. After observing our schools this week and looking at the spike in our local data, it is important that we take further steps to minimize positive COVID-19 cases and student/staff quarantines. We want to keep students and staff in school as much as possible, therefore we will be mandating masks in all grades **preschool through 12th grade starting tomorrow, Wednesday, September 1, 2021 regardless of vaccination status**. This mandate will be in effect until it is lifted, and the decision will be **re-evaluated on Friday, September 17**. This conclusion was not easy, and it isn't something that I want to do. It must be done at this time. You should be aware that there were multiple variables that led me to this conclusion, and you deserve to know what was involved in the decision.

1. Regional & Local Data

The COVID-19 data is now being aggregated and reported at the state and federal level. Prior to this, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health would release information. There are a few key metrics that I've continued to watch: 1) the new cases over the past 2 weeks; 2) the new cases within the 44138 zip code; 3) the number of cases and the degree of spread within communities that are adjacent to ours; 4) the case rate per 100,000 of population (in our case the rate is determined statistically as we do not have 100,000 residents); 5) the current PCR % for our county and Lorain County, and 6) how quickly the PCR has climbed since it was last measured.

In our county, the current PCR rate is 6.88%. The PCR in Lorain County is over 10%. The positivity rate has increased 1.38% since it was last reported, and that is the largest increase we've seen in months. Had we been at 10% like Lorain County, our mask mandate would have already been in effect.

Our case rate for 44138 has steadily increased, and it is currently 236.8 cases per 100,000 which exceeds the 184.20 per 100,000 that Cuyahoga County is reporting. Our total number of cases in 44138 has continued to increase, and currently stands at 53 within the last two weeks. There is a lag in the reporting of cases, and I believe this number is going to increase based on what has been observed within the past 5 days in our schools.

After two days of school, the district began having reported cases of COVID-19 at Falls-Lenox Primary School and Olmsted Falls High School. There were also instances of students testing positive for COVID-19 prior to coming to school along with instances of students who still came to school with COVID results pending. The case at Falls-Lenox led to 6 student quarantines. There is 1 case at the ECC, 2 cases at OFIS, 3 known at OFMS, and 6 students at OFHS. As I am writing this letter to you, I am receiving emails of additional suspected cases. Further, I believe that we may have some staff members that will need to quarantine as well. If your child is sick, please keep your child at home. If your child has a COVID-19 test result pending, please keep your child at home.

2. The Intensity of Contact Tracing

Contact tracing last year was handled locally but facilitated by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health. The local board of health has bowed out of contact tracing, and the decision to not require masking or vaccinations for students or staff created some very complex contact tracing situations. Along with tracing from the source, we need to know if the contacts are vaccinated and/or if they consistently wore a mask. The burden on the staff to conduct the necessary, accurate tracing is difficult and it will eventually create an impossible situation as cases of COVID-19 increase.

I understand that there are likely many disappointed, and perhaps angry, students and parents. I can certainly empathize, however I want to reiterate that I hope this requirement will be temporary and want to assure you that it will be re-evaluated. I want to stress that it is absolutely critical that parents and students follow this requirement. I do not want to be the district that is on the evening news because an individual or group of people believe that we are somehow depriving them of their personal liberty. If this is you I would ask that you call my office at 427-6000 so that we can talk. Personal discretion needs to be checked at times when there is a potential health crisis that impacts our ability to operate school effectively, and I'm afraid it looks as though we are trending in that direction. I cannot wait until we are in the middle of a very troubling situation before taking action. Regardless of potential risk for serious health concerns, the simple fact that we will likely need to quarantine large numbers of students and staff could potentially shut us down, or push us to a full remote status and simply put, I cannot let that happen. If we're to be successful, I'm going to need your help and cooperation.

The government along with the state and regional health officials have forced local school districts into acting as health commissioners, and we are in a situation that will not make everyone satisfied. The decisions made will leave some families pleased and a likely equal number of people unsettled. Let's hang in there together and navigate these rough waters to make sure that our buildings remain open, and keep as many students and staff in school doing what we do best--teaching and learning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jim Lloyd, Ed.D.
Superintendent