

Dickenson County Public Schools

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Haydee L. Robinson, Superintendent



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Dear Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

While we are delighted that the beginning of the 21 – 22 school year brought our children back to in-person instruction, the start of this school year has also brought us some additional challenges dealing with COVID-19. Meeting these challenges has brought about several inquiries regarding the school division’s process to determine close contact of an infected student, determining which students must quarantine, and consideration of possible school closures

We hope the information in this letter will clarify any miscommunication and help to decrease the frustrations and unknowns that our children, staff, parents and community are experiencing. We may not have all the answers, may not like the answers we do have, and may not know all the questions to ask regarding this pandemic. But, our priority is the safety and well-being of all our students and staff. We must work together along with our families and our community to keep our children, ourselves and each other healthy.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Dickenson County Schools, like other school divisions, have followed the CDC guidelines in addition to the guidance from the local health department who are constantly monitoring local data of cases. DCPS continues to follow the CDC and local health department guidance. Currently the state of Virginia, and Dickenson County are in “high transmission” level in regards to COVID-19 cases.

Determining Close Contacts in K – 12 Settings.

What is a Close Contact?

- Close contact means being within 6 feet of someone with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period of having direct contact with respiratory secretions.
- EXCEPTION: In K – 12 settings, a student who was within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both the infected students and the

exposed student wore well-fitting masks the entire time. In this situation, the exposed student does not have to be quarantined.

- If a student is within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student and the infected student or the exposed students are not wearing mask correctly (over their nose and mouth) then the exposed student is considered a close contact and will need to be quarantined.
- If a student is within less than three feet of an infected person, and both students are wearing well-fitting masks correctly, the exposed student will need to quarantine.

Determining Quarantine of Students:

- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated people identified as a close contact should stay home and monitor for symptoms and follow all recommendations (e.g. wear a mask, watch their distance, and wash hands frequently for 14 days after their last exposure
- People who have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine as long they do not have symptoms.
- Fully vaccinated people should still get tested three to 5 days after close contact or exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test.
- People who have had COVID-19 in the past 3 months do not need to quarantine as long as they do not develop new symptoms.

What factors are considered in the potential closure of a school(s)?

1. Transmission within the School: Number of Cases
2. Student Absenteeism due to COVID
3. Staff Capacity: Is there adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching and administrative functions.
4. Collaborations and consultation with the local health departments.

What are the Levels of School Impact to consider when determining the potential of a school closure?

1. High:

- Transmission within a school is high with and significant outbreaks within a short period of time.
- Student Absenteeism due to COVID is high
- Staff Capacity: An adequate number of staff members is not available for facility operations, transportation, teaching and administrative functions.

2. Medium:

- Transmission within a school is medium with two outbreaks within a short period of time or sporadic. Size of outbreaks is small
- Student Absenteeism, is slight above baseline due to COVID

- Staff Capacity is strained by adequate.
3. Low:
 - Transmission within school is low with low and sporadic cases;
 - Student absenteeism is at baseline or low due to COVID
 - Staff Capacity is normal
 4. Current Level of School Impact:
 - At this time, all our schools are in the Low to Medium School Impact Level after daily monitoring of positive and quarantine cases and in consultation with the Health Department.

As Parents and Guardians, what can I do to help my child remain healthy and to protect the health of other children and staff?

1. Please stress to your child to wear masks correctly covering their faces from the above the nose to the chin on the bus, at school, etc.
2. Keep your child home if he or she is having symptoms
3. If your child is in quarantine, please follow the quarantine guidelines and limit exposing other children to your child. Several of our students who were in quarantine have tested positive with COVID.
4. Test routinely: Please provide parental permission when COVID testing is available at schools
5. Consider vaccinations for yourself and your child (if eligible).

Our staff members – school nurses, staff and faculty – are all going the extra mile to help keep our students and staff healthy under extreme circumstances. We all hoped that COVID would be completely gone when school began this year, but it isn't. Health officials tell us that the peak for our region may be in late September or October. We don't have the answers but we do know that what we do today – wearing masks, frequent handwashing, following social distancing and vaccinations - can and will shorten and lessen the impact of COVID-19.

If I may be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Best,

Haydee L. Robinson, Division Superintendent

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