



## Back to School 2021-2022 – **UPDATED August 30, 2021**

Dear Lakewood Parents and Community Members,

At the end of June and again at the start of August, I shared with you our plans for the 2021-22 school year based on the recommendations of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for schools to prevent transmission of COVID-19. The recommendations were based on vaccination rates, positive tests, and hospitalization trends across Michigan at the that time. Now, as we enter our third week of school, I've updated the information. New information is in red.

### **What will school look like?**

We continue to work toward returning to as normal a school year as possible within the confines of what we are required, not recommended, to do. It is important to understand that those requirements come from local sources (Ionia and Barry-Eaton Health Departments), the State (MDHHS, MIOSHA, and MHSAA) and the Federal government (CDC), which often appear to be in conflict with one another.

### **What will instruction look like?**

All students will be expected to attend in-person five days a week following the published school calendar: [21-22 LPS Calendar](#)

The District will return to limited remote learning options based on offerings provided in school years prior to March, 2020, primarily at the secondary level for courses not offered in the Lakewood Public Schools or when there is a course schedule conflict outside the control of the student.

### **Will student breakfast and lunch offerings continue to be “free” during the 2021/2022 school year?**

The Federal Government will continue to underwrite the cost to provide School Class A breakfast and lunch to students free of charge. A la carte items (i.e., cookies, chips, bottles of water, etc.) will have to be purchased through students' established pre-paid food service accounts.

Even though School Class A breakfasts and lunches will be provided free, it is critically important that families that qualify for what is normally referred to as the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program, apply for this program because the District receives additional Federal money for reading and math, at-risk student, and English language learning support based on the percentage of approved district applications.

It is also important that families that qualify for the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program apply because upon qualification, as part of the 1-1 student device initiative being implemented this year their students will automatically be enrolled in the District's Device Insurance Program at no or a reduced cost



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**Are face masks required at school?**

Face masks are an example of the difference between what MDHSS currently recommends and what it currently requires. Because face masks are recommended, they will be optional in the Lakewood Public Schools and provided by parents/guardians as long as the local or state health department does not require them.

**Are face masks required on school buses?**

Yes, school buses are regulated by the United States Department of Transportation. Currently, the CDC has in place an order that requires face masks be worn while on all public transportation, including school buses. It may seem inconsistent that a student would have to wear a mask on a school bus but not at school but this is an example of a requirement versus a recommendation and, practically, speaks to the ability to achieve social distancing on a bus versus in a larger classroom space where students can be spread apart to a greater degree.

[Public Transportation Order](#)

Because masks are required on school buses, the District has been providing students with masks who do not have one as they get on the bus, but this is becoming a very expensive endeavor as students take one in the morning, dispose of it upon entering school, and take another one for the ride home. We did not have this issue last school year when students were required to wear masks all day as students preferred to wear their own and provided it themselves. Please encourage your student riding the bus to bring and use their own mask.

**Are there any exceptions to wearing masks on school buses?**

A child under the age of 2 years or a person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*) is exempt from the mask mandate. [Disability Exemptions of the Order](#)

**Will students be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine to attend school?**

No.

**Will students be separated in classrooms based on who is vaccinated and who is not?**

No.

**Will contact tracing continue?**

Schools are required to report communicable diseases to their local health department within 24-hours regardless of the communicable disease. Positive or probable COVID-19 cases, along with their related close contacts, will be reported to the local health department of residence.

**Will students be required to quarantine?**

Not by the Lakewood Public Schools. This does not prevent a local health department from requiring the quarantining of staff and students.

**When would a student be subject to quarantine by the local health department?**

Last school year, the requirements for quarantining individuals identified as a close contact of a positive case were the same across the area (and state). This is not the case this year as local health departments have

developed different requirements for quarantine and since the school district is located within the jurisdictions of both the Barry-Eaton District and Ionia County Health Departments, we have to work within their differing requirements.

As a result, the District will 1) conduct contact tracing, 2) report identified close contacts to the health department of residence, and 3) notify parents that their student has been identified as a close contact and reported to the health department. The District will not make the decision as to whether the student is required to quarantine or not. That is the responsibility of the local health department based on their individual interpretation and requirements.

**Won't that create confusion and perceived disparate treatment?**

Yes, but, currently the two health departments are implementing requirements of quarantine differently.

**Does the District have to follow local health department orders?**

Yes.

**Violation of Health Director's Orders**

A person who violates a rule or order of the department is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 6 months, or a fine of not more than \$200, or both. MCL 333.2261

An individual may be arrested if a violation occurs in the presence of a police officer, or the police officer has reasonable cause to believe the individual has violated a rule or order. MCL 764.15(1)

**Does a vaccinated staff member or student have to quarantine?**

A fully vaccinated individual is exempt from quarantine.

**Would an individual subject to quarantine who is fully vaccinated need to proof they are fully vaccinated?**

Yes. If you are identified as a close contact and subject to quarantine but are fully vaccinated, proof of vaccination will be required to remain in school during the proposed quarantine period for the safety of those with whom you will be in contact.

This was the answer provided in previous editions of this Q&A document, but as all vaccinations are entered into the Michigan Care Improvement Registry's School Immunization Reporting System (MCIR SIRS), local health departments can verify a person's vaccination status before contacting them to require quarantine.

**Will student-athletes be required to be tested for COVID-19 to participate?**

No, MDHHS and MHSAA lifted all requirements for student-athlete testing on June 22, 2021.

Thank you for all you do to keep yourself and our community safe,



Steven C. Skalka