



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Unified Government Public Health Department

619 Ann Avenue, Kansas City, KS 66101-3038

Phone (913) 573-8855

wycokck.org/health

Monday, July 26, 2021

Dear School Superintendents and School Board Members,

The 2020-2021 School Year was especially challenging due to COVID-19 and we appreciate the ongoing partnership with each of your districts. Unfortunately, as COVID-19 cases surge again in the Kansas City metro area, ongoing due diligence to protect students and staff is necessary. We also recognize that in-person learning is best for students' education and physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. With these two items in mind, the Unified Government Public Health Department wishes to share with you our guidance and recommendations for the 2021-2022 School Year.

This guidance is based largely on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention" document, which can be found at [this link](#). This document outlines seven prevention strategies essential to safe in-person learning. These prevention strategies use a layered approach and take into consideration community transmission levels. According to the CDC, a layered approach is critical for school mitigation and layered strategies implemented at the same time provide the greatest level of protection. We have identified five prevention strategies as critical strategies that should be prioritized, **bolded** in the list below.

1. **Universal and correct use of masks.** Masks are shown to significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19 in indoor settings. A universal mask policy for all students and staff sets the expectation that people will use masks throughout the school. Masks should be required in all classroom and non-classroom settings, including hallways, restrooms, gyms, busses and offices. Masks can be removed in certain circumstances such as eating, drinking, and outdoor activities, but students should be distanced appropriately. This recommendation is not only supported by the CDC and the UGPHD, but also by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).
2. **Physical distancing.** Establish school policies and implement structural interventions to promote physical distancing between people. Efforts should be made to physically distance students at least 3 feet apart in classroom settings. During higher risk activities such as singing, shouting, band or athletics, at least 6 feet of distance should be maintained.
3. **Diagnostic and screening testing.** We recommend that schools offer diagnostic testing for any students or staff exhibiting symptoms of COVID. The UGPHD can offer assistance in



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implementing testing. We also recommend that schools utilize screening testing based on community transmission. Further guidance on testing can be found in the CDC guidance.

4. **Vaccination, when applicable.** COVID-19 vaccination is available for all students and staff 12 years of age and older. More information on vaccination sites and events can be found at wycovaccines.org. Please reach out if you would like to coordinate a vaccination event for your school district.
5. **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine.** Students and staff with a positive test result should isolate at home for 10 days after their symptoms begin, or 10 days from their positive test if no symptoms are present. Unvaccinated close contacts of a positive case—defined as within 6 feet for 10 minutes or longer—should quarantine at home for 14 days from their last date of exposure. Any students or staff with symptoms of COVID should stay home and seek testing before returning to schools. For additional details, please consult the UGPHD for assistance.
6. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette. The basic principles of proper handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes should be emphasized among students and staff. Provide adequate supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, and trash cans in classrooms.
7. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities. Make changes to physical spaces to maintain a healthy environment and facilities, including improving ventilation. Routinely clean high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs and light switches.

We hope this information will prove useful to you during the upcoming school year, and we wish you, your staff and students a very productive and healthy school year!

Sincerely,

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Additional References

For your convenience, here are links to some additional resources that might provide more information for school leaders, staff and parents about COVID-19 guidance for the upcoming school year:

COVID-19 School Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Guidance from Children's Mercy Hospital:

<https://www.childrensmercy.org/siteassets/media/covid-19/guidance-for-school-re-opening-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf>