



VERNON TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT  
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March 2, 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This correspondence will serve to inform the community of the latest revisions to the COVID-19 protocols.

**Effective March 7, 2022, masks will be optional for all faculty, staff, employees and visitors in schools and on buses.** As per my previous correspondence on February 11, 2022, the Vernon Township School District encourages the respectful acknowledgement of optional mask wearing and personal choice. There are many reasons why staff or students may choose to wear masks and it is essential that the wearing of masks by anyone who feels they would like to for the protection of themselves or others, is permitted to do so without negative comment. Likewise those who feel comfortable unmasking under the “mask optional” protocol, should do so.

The Vernon Township School District continues to follow the New Jersey Department of Health and the Sussex County Department of Health on guidance and measures to minimize the spread of COVID. To that end, there are a few important factors you should be aware of. This [link](#) provides direct access to the most current guidance from the NJDOH for K-12 schools. However this excerpt from the NJDOH document is important to note:

In the K–12 indoor classroom setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed (i.e., holding class outdoors with educator supervision), the close contact definition *excludes students* who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. ***However, without universal masking, the school must be able to readily identify whether both students were masked prior to applying the close contact exception.***

- This means that if students have selected to be mask optional and they were within 3-6 feet of a COVID positive student, and are unvaccinated, they would be required to quarantine.
- If students are defined as a close contact without a mask and are vaccinated (inclusive of a booster shot if they are eligible), they are not required to quarantine.
- If students are unvaccinated and defined as a close contact and both students are wearing masks, neither student quarantines.
- If we cannot verify that students were fully masked during close contact, the students will be required to quarantine (unless fully vaccinated, inclusive of boosters if the students are eligible).

Quarantine times remain five days, as per the changes in January. Lastly, the DOH has advised us that **if a child comes to school without a mask and is sent to the nurses office for illness or COVID-like symptoms, the child will be required to wear a mask awaiting pick up from a parent before the child is dismissed.**

Included in this correspondence, please find slides from a powerpoint presentation that the NJDOH provided to school districts in order to have clear guidance on quarantine and isolation guidelines.

For all school visitors in our schools, you will be required to complete a symptom screening form prior to entering the school buildings. If school visitors are showing symptoms, they will not be permitted to enter or volunteer in our school; however we welcome school- community engagement and look forward to rescheduling the volunteer opportunity for parents, etc.

For those of you who have upcoming travel plans over Spring Recess, the travel guidelines from the NJDOH are [here](#) for your review.

While the mask optional practice on March 7, 2022 is a welcome change for so many of us who wish to see our students smiling faces, the COVID guidelines are still in effect. I want to thank you for your caution and vigilance over the last two years. Please continue to utilize layered strategies such as frequent hand washing, physical distancing, and/or mask wearing when necessary. Through constant efforts, I am hoping that the COVID restrictions will continue to decrease and we will eventually experience a more traditional school setting in the near future.

Sincerely,

***Karen D'Avino***

Karen D'Avino  
Superintendent of Schools