



WEST LONG BRANCH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

135 Locust Avenue

West Long Branch, NJ 07764

Mrs. Christina M. Egan
Superintendent of Schools

March 4, 2022

Dear WLB Families,

In anticipation of the end of the mask mandate on March 7th, the West Long Branch School District has continued to evaluate our health and safety protocols. The below considerations were taken into account:

1. There continues to be an extremely low number of positive cases in our schools. In the month of February, BME had zero positive COVID cases, and FAS had four.
2. In the weekly CALI reports, the Central East region has been downgraded to Moderate-Yellow after spending nearly two months in Very High-Red.
3. Data from the WLB 2020-2021 school year, as well as information gathered from surrounding school districts, indicates that there are a very low number of in-school close contacts who have subsequently tested positive for COVID-19. The rates of positivity are much higher for in-home close contacts.
4. New logistical challenges will be introduced when face masks become optional. We sought input from our staff members responsible for contact tracing and monitoring quarantine timelines.

In light of the above, please see the following protocols which will go into effect on **Monday, March 7th**. While many of us are looking forward to a return to normal school operations, please note that the unlikely event of an outbreak substantial enough to jeopardize in-person learning for our schools may necessitate a brief return to more significant mitigation protocols.

Mask-Optional Learning Environment

The West Long Branch School District will become a mask-optional learning environment.

The Only Situations Where Masks Will NOT Be Optional

1. COVID-19 Positive Individuals
 - If an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 chooses to shorten quarantine and return on day 6, the wearing of a face mask will be required on days 6-10.
 - If mask wearing is not possible or desirable, the return to school date will remain day 11.
2. Symptomatic individuals – Symptomatic individuals waiting to go home will be required to wear a face mask until they depart. Masks can be provided by the nurse.

Supporting our Students

3. We ask that all families please have discussions with their children prior to Monday, March 7th, so that they understand and are prepared for the mask-optional environment.
4. The West Long Branch School District respects and supports the decisions that each of our families will make for their children. There will be no tolerance for any form of harassment, intimidation, or bullying (HIB) in relation to people's personal decisions regarding face masks or vaccination.

Contact Tracing

For the below reasons, contact tracing will be greatly reduced in our schools:



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- Students will be making choices throughout the day about when they will wear/not wear a face mask. Due to the fluid nature of these choices, the district will not be identifying or tracking students who are unmasked or masked during any given instructional period, day, or week.
- Due to the inability to track masking decisions and the large number of transitions throughout the student day, the fidelity, integrity, and accuracy of contact tracing will be compromised.

Moving forward:

5. In grades PreK-4, families will be notified when a COVID-positive individual was in their child's homeroom.
6. In grades 5-8, families will be notified when a COVID-positive individual was at their lunch table. Furthermore, in grades 5-8 the district's weekly update to the COVID-19 dashboard will include the grade level of any positive cases.

Quarantine for Close Contacts

7. **In-School Close Contacts – NOT MANDATORY**
 - Quarantine for asymptomatic individuals will not be mandated by the district.
 - If you receive notification of potential in-school contact, no action is required and your child may continue in-person learning. Please monitor closely for symptoms.
 - Families may still choose to voluntarily quarantine their child for up to ten days. Virtual instruction will be provided.
8. **In-Home Close Contacts - MANDATORY**
 - Quarantine **will remain required** in cases where the close contact occurred **in the home**.

Testing/Symptom Watch

9. Please continue to monitor for symptoms, and do not send children to school if they are ill.
10. Our district has a supply of home COVID-19 tests, and will provide them free of charge to any family who requests them.
11. Symptomatic individuals will continue to be sent home and required to engage in COVID testing before returning to the school buildings, at the discretion of the school nurse.

Other Protocols

12. Building Principals will accommodate families who wish for their children to have increased social distancing. Aside from individual accommodations, there will be no segregation in the classroom of masked and unmasked students.
13. Plexi/plastic desk barriers are available for students upon parent/guardian request.

Please reach out to us if we can be of any support to you or your children during this transition.

Sincerely,

Christina M. Egan
Superintendent of Schools