

Friday, August 13, 2021

Dear Avonworth Parents & Caregivers,

We hope this message finds you doing well. This communication is to provide an update regarding current COVID conditions in Allegheny County and ongoing planning for the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

**COVID Conditions in Allegheny County**  
**Allegheny County Data from the PA Department of**  
**Health COVID-19 Early Warning Dashboard ([source](#))**

Criteria	8/6/2021	8/13/2021
Incidence Rate Per 100K	52.9	63.7
PCR Percent Positivity	4.9%	5.1%

**Key:**

Blue = Low Transmission Level  
Yellow = Moderate Transmission Level  
Orange = Substantial Transmission Level  
Red = High Transmission Level

**NOTE:** Per the CDC - The transmission level is determined by both the **Cases Per 100K** and **the Percent Positivity Rate** falling in a level. **If the two indicators suggest different levels, the actions corresponding to the higher threshold is chosen.**

Based on current data, Allegheny County is currently at the **Substantial Transmission Level**

On Monday, August 11, 2021, the Avonworth Board of Directors approved K-12 universal masking for students, staff, and visitors to begin the 2021-2022 school year.

**Concise Rationale:**

- In-person learning is the most important shared goal of our school community.
- In addition to the health protections, this approach sets a foundation for continuity of in-person learning while significantly reducing the risk of quarantine-based disruptions.
- Per the CDC and ACHD, students who are masked and would otherwise be considered a “close contact” **do not need to be quarantined** if within 3’ - 6’ of a COVID-19 positive individual.

**Expanded Rationale:**

- Aligns with updated guidance of the CDC, AAP, PA DOH, PDE, and ACHD;

- Reinforced by the shift in Allegheny County conditions from low transmission levels in June and early July to the current level of substantial transmission (i.e., significant change in conditions and guidance within the past month);
- Reflects understanding of the Delta variant and risk of transmission among vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals with the acknowledgment that a vaccine is not yet available for children age 11 and under;
- Aligns with the recommendation of Dr. Bogen (ACHD Director);
- Protects continuity of learning against contact tracing and quarantine at a time when school districts in the country that already started the 2021 - 2022 school year have experienced disruptions due to cases and quarantine;
- Protects the adult population of the school and minimizes the potential need for substitute teachers.

**Additional Considerations:**

- Full and regular in-person school attendance is an extremely positive step toward normalcy.
- We understand frustration and fatigue especially after a summer largely without masks and the lowest levels of transmission.
- Our goal as we work together is to continue the positive culture within our schools that is focused on learning.
- Cloth masks were effectively used in the 2020 - 2021 school year.
- A process will be shared so that parents can submit a written request from a medical professional to address individual concerns (i.e., *if wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability*).
- To start the year, we sincerely hope that the initial masking requirement can be met with limited exceptions so that the students can experience in-person learning and continuity.

Additional information regarding the start of the 2021-2022 school year will be provided next week.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,

Cheryl A. Griffith, Ed.D.  
Acting Superintendent

Jeff M. Hadley, Ed.D.  
Assistant Superintendent