

Greetings St. Luke's Community,

Two weeks ago, I shared that we would transition to an optional mask policy for our students and employees on Monday, January 31st. Although masking is still appreciated, the time has arrived, and we will now offer our families the choice to mask their child or not. To be clear, we are not transitioning to a no mask mandate, but to an optional mask policy. This means that masks are not prohibited, but can or cannot be worn at the discretion of each family. Our school masking policy has changed, but our steadfast commitment to keeping our community safe has not.

Since the fall of 2020, our students and faculty have been nothing short of amazing in their willingness to adopt public health guidelines by masking indoors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance on masks this past week, stating that respirators, such as N95s, are more protective than surgical masks, which in turn protect better than cloth masks. These updates are appropriate from a scientific standpoint. They also offer a pathway to compromise in the place where masking policies are most hotly debated ~ our schools. The research has suggested that respirators and other high-quality masks are highly effective at protecting their wearers, regardless of what people around them are doing. Additionally, ninety-eight percent of our faculty and staff are fully vaccinated and seventy-six percent have received a booster. While we have not collected the data on the percentage of our students vaccinated, 92% are eligible for vaccination. Therefore, we believe that our school can finally safely make masks optional for students and staff. Given this change, we will need to also modify our quarantine policy.

In an effort to keep all members of our community safe, we encourage masks and ask those who are eligible to be vaccinated, to get vaccinated. We will also continue to sanitize our classrooms, sterilize commonly used areas, and promote frequent hand washing.

As of Monday, January 31, 2022, the mask policy of St. Luke's will transition from required masking to optional masking for all students, teachers, and visitors on campus. As before, we strongly encourage parents to keep any student who has COVID-like symptoms home. We recognize the importance of in-person instruction, but again, the safety of our community is of utmost importance. Please use this information as a guideline to help make appropriate decisions. If you have additional questions, please contact Nurse Linda Richardson.

What should you do if you test positive for COVID-19?

COVID-19 positive with symptoms: CDC guidance recommends time away from school to five (5) days from symptom onset for those with resolved or mild and improving symptoms. The individual must be fever-free for 24 hours without Tylenol or fever-reducing medications and have improving symptoms. If you have had a fever or moderate or more severe symptoms at day five, you should not return to work or school until the fever has resolved off medications for at least 24 hours and your symptoms are improving.

COVID-19 positive without symptoms: CDC guidance decreases the time away from school to five (5) days from the date of a positive test. Although it is not required, we strongly recommend that the individual returns to school *after* a negative test (rapid test recommended) for the safety of others.

How should you calculate days?

When calculating days, day zero is the date a positive test was performed. So an asymptomatic individual may return to school after five days of isolation on day six.

Day 0	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Date Test Sample Taken, if no Symptoms	Isolation	Isolation	Isolation	Isolation	Isolation	Return to School
OR						
Date Symptoms Started						

When returning to school, what is required?

- Please contact Nurse Linda Richardson before returning to school to receive clearance.
- A repeat COVID test is not required to return to school but is strongly recommended.

- If the individual does not provide a negative test, then a mask must be worn until 10 days after symptom onset [symptomatic] or the positive test [asymptomatic].
- After returning to school, the individual should self-monitor for symptoms and seek re-evaluation from their health care provider if symptoms develop or worsen.

What should you do if you have been exposed to COVID-19?

Vaccinated and Boosted:

- In general, asymptomatic individuals who have been exposed to the virus in this way do not require any restriction from school if they have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters, according to CDC guidance
- Self-monitor for symptoms
- Stop working and contact the school nurse and health care professional if symptoms develop.

What should you do if you have been exposed to COVID-19?

Unvaccinated and/or Not Boosted:

- Individuals who have been directly exposed to the virus should quarantine for five (5) days
- Must wear a mask for ten (10) days when around others indoors
- Self-monitor for symptoms
- Contact health care provider, and get tested for COVID-19 approximately three (3) days (range 2-4 days) after last exposure. Self-isolate and contact health care provider if symptoms develop

For the safety of our community, please err on the side of caution. The health of our community remains our top priority! While we look forward to seeing our students each day, if your child is experiencing COVID-related symptoms, they should stay home and contact your health provider, who will recommend whether testing is necessary. These guidelines will be used to direct employees and students regarding their ability to attend school or their need to stay at home, effective January 31, 2022.

We understand how our decision to transition to a mask optional policy may create some tensions within our community. However, I encourage each of us to reflect on what makes SLES so special, and I can assure you that none of those reasons have changed. In fact, I believe that the respect we will exhibit for our neighbors and their decisions will help to propel our community even stronger. We are one community, perhaps with different perspectives, but one common guiding principle ~ The St. Luke's Way ~ As members of a Christian community, our conduct is guided by love and respect for God, our school, our neighbors, and ourselves. We demonstrate the St. Luke's Way through behavior that is courteous and cooperative. Therefore, I also graciously ask that you speak with your children and share the importance of respecting the decisions and opinions of others.

I apologize for the length of this communication, but we hope you can appreciate our desire to offer choice to our families despite the conflicting information about the efficacy of masks. As we attempt to forge a greater sense of normalcy for our students, we will continue to be thoughtful about keeping all of our students and employees safe. We appreciate your confidence in the work we do daily on behalf of your children and I ask for support in trusting that we are making what we believe to be the best decision for where we are now.

Warmly,

Chelsea Collins



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