

Transitioning to Optional COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies in the Londonderry School District

As a school system we are not going to reach the 80% vaccination rate for COVID-19, in staff and students, that the NH Department of Public Health has set for us to relax mitigation strategies in this pandemic. However, by MLK Day 2022, or soon after, any staff or student that wants the protection from COVID-19 with a vaccination, will have had a chance to get that immunity by that time.

By MLK Day 2022, or soon after, we intend to shift to optional COVID-19 mitigation strategies for those that we can control as a school district, including facemasks, moving forward.

To make this shift we will report out to the School Board and Community on December 14th, 2021, our findings on the legality of this approach during the pandemic as a school system. We are consulting our insurance company and our legal counsel to ensure we have the legal opening to shift the liability away from the school system to individuals. With no current legal requirement for staff and students to vaccinate for COVID-19 in New Hampshire Public Schools, we argue staff and families will own the liability for their choices around vaccines and facemasks, and other mitigation strategies while the pandemic continues.

Within this overall approach, we would still have mitigation strategies surrounding any documented medically vulnerable students during the pandemic as needed to protect them.

By the January 11th, 2022, we will share with the School Board and Community our findings from the Medical Advisory Committee. Our findings will focus on:

- Our predicament of having a low vaccination rate against COVID-19 with substantial community spread of the virus in the community and our schools.
 - Explain what the “endemic” stage of any pandemic is, and how we will struggle to reach it with a low vaccination rate.
- The risks any unvaccinated staff and students will have with substantial community spread of COVID-19, especially with optional mitigation strategies in place within our schools.
- The protections of being vaccinated against COVID-19 and choosing individual mitigation strategies with substantial community spread of the virus within our schools and community.
- Clear timelines around vaccine and natural immunity to guide decision making for staff and students.

By early January we should also have our optional asymptomatic PCR testing set up with for any staff or students that are interested through Convenient MD. From this program, we also intend to have symptomatic rapid antigen testing available to staff and students at the District Office when needed to return to school.

With this district lead transition, there are some approaches to COVID-19 that we will not be able to control because they are determined by the state and the public health department.

- Students and staff that test positive for COVID-19 will still need to follow the isolation guidelines until they are updated or changed by NH.
- Students or staff that are unvaccinated and have a positive COVID-19 case in their household will still need to quarantine until that guideline is updated or changed by NH.
- We do expect to see a similar number of positive cases enter our building and spread with our low vaccination rate and a shift to optional mitigation strategies as we have already seen so far this school year. We will have to follow any directives from the Department of Public Health that may come if we continue to get clusters and outbreaks after this transition.

