

## **2020-2021 School Year Reopening Questions & Answers Relating to COVID-19**

### ***Parent/Student Questions:***

#### **Q. Who will be required to wear face coverings on August 19, 2020?**

A. Only students and staff at the Jr./Sr. High School (Grades 7-12) will be required to wear face coverings when entering and leaving the school building, during passing periods, and in classrooms or areas in the building where proper social distancing cannot occur (Students and staff cannot keep six feet away from one another). Southern Public Schools is also highly recommending that all students and staff wear face covering throughout the school day when it is feasible.

We are also moving larger classes at the Jr./Sr. High School (Grades 7-12) to the commons, the media center, and/or the auditorium in an effort to provide adequate space so students and staff can abide by the social distancing measures throughout the school day.

#### **Q. Under what circumstances will students be exempted from wearing face coverings?**

A. Please remember that only staff and students in grades 7-12 will be required to wear face coverings when entering and leaving the school building, during passing periods, and in classrooms or areas in the building where proper social distancing cannot occur. Exceptions will be made for a student with a disability or as required by law, such as the decisions of a student's IEP or 504 teams.

#### **Q. Will a face covering be provided by the school or can I select one for my child to wear?**

A. Parents may provide an approved face covering for their children, but the district will have them available free of charge.

#### **Q. Speaking about face coverings, can you expand on what the district means when it says that all students and staff at the Elementary School may be required to wear face coverings in classrooms or areas in the building where proper social distancing cannot occur (Students and staff cannot keep six feet away from one another) and exceptions will be made for students in grades preschool through first grade?**

A. Yes, if there would be an uptick of COVID-19 cases in our area and public health officials would give us the option between requiring face coverings for all staff and students in grades 2-12 or moving to a remote learning environment, the district would prefer to keep students in district if we can maintain a safe learning environment for everyone. It is extremely hard to replicate all of the benefits associated with in person learning as compared to remote learning. This holds especially true for students in the primary grades.

#### **Q. Can you explain how and why the reopening plan (COVID-19: The Path Ahead) was created?**

A. Yes, Dr. Proski, the superintendent, started to work on reopening plan (COVID-19: The Path Ahead) in early May with help from the local health officials, KSB School Law, and superintendents across the state of Nebraska. In addition, numerous drafts and updates were sent out to all Southern staff members in an effort to get their input. The district also put the reopening plan on the district website and social media pages numerous times to ask the public for feedback on the reopening plan. Based on requirements from the Nebraska Department of

Education and the governor, all reopening plans have to be approved by the local health officials before they can move forward with in person learning this fall.

**Please Note:** The district's reopening plan (COVID-19: The Path Ahead) may change as new guidance becomes available from the Nebraska Department of Education, the CDC, and other state or local public health agencies.

**Q. Why was a parent survey not created to gain feedback on the reopening plan (COVID-19: The Path Ahead)?**

A. When it comes to a global pandemic and health care in general, it is never going to be subjective in nature. It is no different when a person goes to a local physician, a patient does not get to pick what medicine is prescribed or how the medical procedure will be completed. With that being said, the district did not want to solicit feedback from the general public that they could ultimately not use because in the end, the experts in the medical field had to sign off on the reopening plan (COVID-19: The Path Ahead).

**Q. What can a parent do if they feel the district is taking too many safety precautions or if a parent feels the district is not taking enough safety precautions?**

A. The district understands wholeheartedly that public perceptions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic vary greatly between individuals. If a parent is unhappy with the reopening plan (COVID-19: The Path Ahead) that was created with the experts in the medical field, they always have the option to home school their son or daughter during the 2020-2021 school year and they can contact the Nebraska Department of Education for more information regarding this matter.

**Q. What learning format will be utilized for the start of school?**

A. Based upon the current COVID risk level in our area, the district plans for all students to attend school in person when school starts on August 19, 2020. If the risk level increases, this plan could change to include remote learning for some or all grade levels.

**Q. Will there be an alternative digital learning option available if I do not want my child to attend?**

A. Not unless your child is determined to need a different educational placement by law, such as a determination made by an IEP or 504 team, has an underlying health condition, or they are under a directed medical quarantine. In those circumstances, alternative arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis with the involvement of parents and the student.

**Q. Will my child be counted absent if she/he is under a quarantine directed by a medical provider?**

A. The school must be in receipt of a quarantine order or directive by a medical provider or authorized health official. Absences due to a quarantine order shall not be counted toward your child's chronic absenteeism limit if that documentation is provided.

**Q. What constitutes if a student has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and they will need to quarantine for a certain amount of time? If a student walks pass another person with COVID-19 in the hallway, will they need to be quarantined?**

A. Based on contact tracing, exposure has occurred when a person is less than six feet away from another person with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes and not wearing a face covering. If a face covering is worn by both individuals, then the distance and timeframe all changes. In addition, the district will be using Public Health Solutions Recommendations for the Screening, Exclusion, and Re-Admittance of Ill Students and Staff for COVID-19 in Schools (This document can be found of page 4).

**Q. What other steps is the district taking to make attending school safe in August?**

A. The following essential actions will be taken to ensure that the facilities are safe for students and staff to inhabit. The district will:

- Change air filters regularly.
- Distribute wastebaskets, tissues, and CDC approved hand sanitizer to every office and classroom so that these materials can be used upon entry and exit into any discrete location and during transition between classrooms (Pending availability).
- Post signage about frequent hand washing, cough etiquette, and nose blowing. Signage will be widely posted, disseminated, and encouraged through various methods of communication).
- Follow guidance from the CDC when performing all cleaning related duties.

The following essential actions will be taken to ensure that the students and staff stay healthy and safe. The district will:

- Encourage students and staff to stay away from school when sick.
- Teach students to use face coverings appropriately, stress the importance of covering a cough, and using/discarding tissues appropriately.
- Stress the importance of keeping hands away from the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Teach students and staff how to keep surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Introduce hand washing best practices (Using soap and water and scrubbing for approximately 20 seconds before rinsing).
- Develop fixed schedules for hand washing (3-4 times a day).
- Ensuring that adequate supplies are available and in good functional condition (Pending availability).

**Q. Will parents be notified if there is a case of COVID-19 in my child's school or classroom?**

A. Not from the school, unless required by law and permitted by confidentiality laws. If contact tracing is determined to be necessary by our public health department, they will contact you.

**Q. Will schools close and move to digital learning if one or more cases of COVID-19 is discovered among school students or staff?**

A. Every effort will be made to keep schools open. One or more cases will not trigger an automatic closing of schools. The decision to suspend in-person school attendance and move to remote learning in some or all grade levels will be based on a number of factors and include consultation with our public health department and local medical providers.

**Q. Will district transportation still be provided?**

A. Yes and as of now, students will not be required to wear face coverings on school buses.

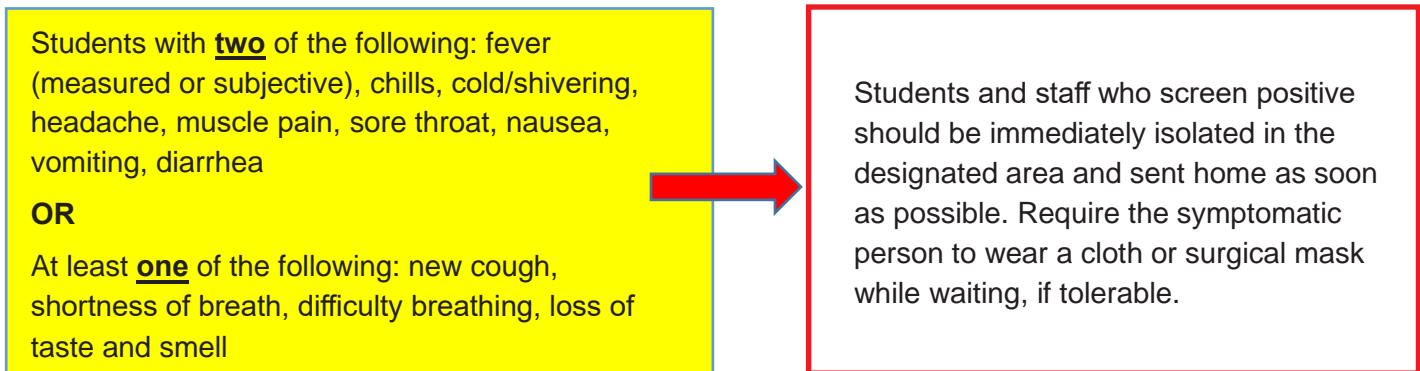
**Q. What can I do as a parent to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 at school?**

A. It is very important that you monitor your children's health and keep them home when they don't feel well, even if an illness has not been confirmed by a medical provider. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, muscle aches, breathing difficulty, coughing, loss of senses of smell and taste, and diarrhea in children, though symptoms can vary widely and some children exhibit few, if any, symptoms.

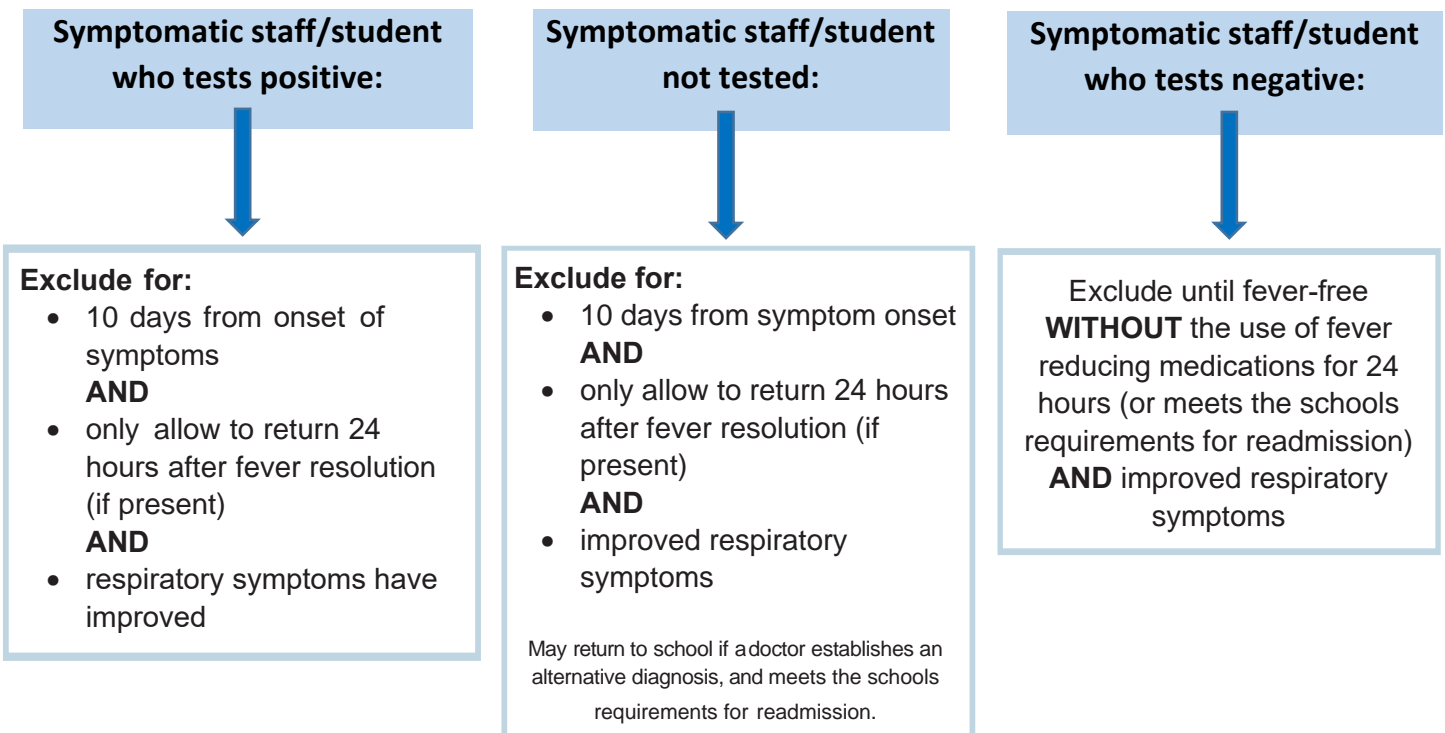


## Public Health Recommendations for the Screening, Exclusion, and Re-Admittance of Ill Students and Staff for COVID-19 in Schools

The following symptom screening criteria for ill students and staff is based on the most current research. Because people with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness, the following criteria has been developed to assist schools in identifying presumptive positive COVID-19 cases.



### Re-Admittance to School



**There is no reason for a student or staff member to get a “negative test” to be cleared for the return to school.** A COVID-19 positive individual does not need a repeat COVID-19 test or a doctor’s note in order to return.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, please call the Public Health Solutions District Health Department at 402.826-3880.