



Hello Norse Nation!

I know we are all very excited to start school next week! I am excited to not only start school, but to hopefully keep kids in our buildings learning with our incredible staff for 5 days a week with an uninterrupted school year. If there was one thing we heard and learned last year, it was that we as a school community want our students engaged 5 days a week in our buildings with our staff. My job is to try and provide the best education possible for our students. I am an educational leader. I am not a health professional. I seek guidance from professionals as I navigate my own life and when leading our school system. This ranges from roofing experts, plumbing experts, curriculum experts, and health professionals/experts, etc.

The following is just a snapshot of what we have all learned from our nation's/state's health professionals:

- **MDHHS:** "Require universal masking for all students, staff, and visitors regardless of community transmission rate or vaccination status."

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/COVID-19_Guidance_for_Operating_Schools_Safely_728838_7.pdf

- **American Academy of Pediatrics:** "Everything possible must be done to keep students in schools in-person." "All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school"

<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

- **CDC:** "Updated to recommend universal indoor masking for all students, staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status"

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

- **Public Health - Muskegon County** - Strongly recommend universal indoor masking in school settings. Also, our health department has confirmed that if a positive case is present **in a classroom that is fully masked - there is no need for any quarantining requirements.**

It appears, as a community, we need to be prepared to live with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future. That means there will be peaks and valleys, spikes and dips, in terms of community transmission. Since my previous community communication, Muskegon County has gone from low transmission level to moderate to substantial and now to high (the highest level). At this point, as a school community, we will adapt to these fluctuations as follows:

When our community transmission is “substantial” or “high” per the CDC data, we will require masks/face coverings inside our building - DK through 12th grade. When the data indicates a “moderate” or “low” level of community transmission, masks/face coverings will be strongly recommended.

**** Therefore, the following measures will be taken to start this school year (effective August 30):**

- **DK-12th Grade: Masks/Face coverings are required for all individuals inside North Muskegon Public Schools. I am confident NMPS is following the guidance set forth by our health experts and we are taking solid precautions to protect the safety of all our students - and most importantly, keeping them in school learning with our staff. Please note this decision is impacted by the fact that we are one big building with all ages of students interacting and using the same spaces.**
- **Per Federal requirement, anyone on public transportation (including a school bus) must wear a mask.**
- **At this point, we will not be allowing visitors in our building.**
- **The COVID-19 vaccine is NOT required for school enrollment or attendance, but recommended for those eligible.**
- **We will continue to follow MHSAA guidelines relative to athletics.**
- **NMPS does not issue quarantine orders, but will cooperate as required by law with Public Health-Muskegon in their efforts. Per the CDC, “close contact” does not necessitate a quarantine for individuals in a school if both individuals wore well-fitting masks and are/were at least 3 feet apart. This should dramatically cut down on the need for people in our buildings to quarantine - if not eliminate this totally.**

****Each day, we are asking you to consider these two questions:**

- **Is my child sick today? If so, please do not send your child to school.**
- **Has my child been issued a quarantine or isolation order from the Health Department? If so, please do not send your child to school.**

I also want to make the following crystal clear: Other administrators, teachers, secretaries and support staff are NOT the ones making this decision. They, like our students, will have this requirement. They have very important jobs to do for our kids.

Therefore, I respectfully ask that no ire be directed to school employees. We need them to effectively spend their time working with kids.

As a school community we will be ready to welcome our students back. We will be ready to connect with them, support them, care for them, and ensure the 2021-22 school year is a success! Rather than allowing ourselves to become divided about mask policies, my sincere hope is that we move forward together focusing on what we agree upon: doing everything we can to keep our kids in school 5 days per week and do so safely in order to help them thrive without school interruptions. Thank you for your partnership, trust, patience, and support!

Take care of yourself and each other!

Dr. Curt Babcock
Superintendent