

WESTSIDE SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN - MASKS REQUIRED FOR ALL STAFF/STUDENTS

Updated for Westside Community Schools September 22, 2021

Keeping our students and staff in school in as safe an environment as we can remains a top priority. Since the start of this pandemic, we have learned so much about the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 on the lives of our students and their families, and we are doing our best to provide as much support as we can for all.

We are extending our K-12 mask policy on all campuses through the end of our 1st quarter on Wednesday, October 13th. We will continue to analyze our internal data, as well as community-wide data in the coming weeks, and will make an announcement on/around October 12th as to whether or not masks will be required when our 2nd quarter begins with students on Tuesday, October 19th. (NO SCHOOL for students on October 14, 15, or 18). Masks will be required at Parent-Teacher Conferences on October 13th and 14th. We will remain in close contact with medical experts at UNMC, Douglas County Health Department, and Children’s Hospital and Medical Center.

As you will see with the data below, we have seen a small decline in cases throughout our school district for the past few weeks. We hope this trend continues.

Total Confirmed Cases within District 66:

- Week of August 16-22
 - 21 cases (18 students, 3 staff)
- Week of August 23-29
 - 41 cases (35 students, 6 staff)
- Week of August 30 – Sept 5
 - 29 cases (26 students, 3 staff)
- Week of September 6 – 12
 - 23 cases (20 students, 3 staff)
- Week of September 13 – 19
 - 19 cases (19 students, 0 staff)

Total Confirmed Cases of school-aged children throughout Douglas County according to DCHD Dashboard:

	<u>0-4 year olds</u>	<u>5-9 year olds</u>	<u>10-14 year olds</u>	<u>15-19 year olds</u>
● August 7 th	26	45	67	53
● August 21 st	58	74	83	71
● Sept 4 th	70	117	119	118
● Sept 11 th	44	96	108	92
● Sept 18 th	37	86	84	66

We continue to weigh many different factors, to include a combination of the following:

- Number of confirmed cases within our school district decreasing instead of increasing by week on a consistent and steady basis.
- Number of quarantines within our school district decreasing instead of increasing by week on a consistent and steady basis.
- Number of total confirmed cases per 100,000 residents per week decreasing instead of increasing by week within Douglas County.
- Number of total school-aged children with confirmed cases per week decreasing instead of increasing by week within Douglas County.
- Access to vaccinations for our elementary-aged students allowing their families to make a decision as to whether or not the vaccine is something they want for their child(ren).

Important Information as of September 22, 2021:

- **ALL students and staff are required to wear masks while inside Westside Community Schools buildings and facilities.** These guidelines are in place regardless of vaccination status.
 - We strongly recommend all staff members, parents, and students who have not yet received the COVID-19 vaccine and are eligible, to please consider getting the vaccine.
 - The Food and Drug Administration approved the Pfizer-BioNTech on August 23 for use by individuals 16 and older.
 - This vaccine continues to be available under Emergency Use Authorization for individuals 12 through 15 years of age.
 - Click here for additional details (Source: FDA <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-first-covid-19-vaccine>)
 - Westside will follow contact tracing procedures as directed by Douglas County Health, which could include quarantine for those not vaccinated.
- **Westside Community Schools does not plan to offer Extended Campus Learning for the 2021/22 school year.** Our data suggests that for a vast majority of our students, in-person learning is, by far, the most effective format for learning.
- We will continue to make/share decisions every few weeks and will notify families/staff. We will make necessary adjustments by following updated DHMs and recommendations from local, state, and national medical professionals. We are making decisions based on information we have available.

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QUESTIONS? Visit www.westside66.org or email feedback@westside66.net.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDELINES, pg 2**
- **SECONDARY SCHOOL GUIDELINES, pg 4**
- **GENERAL GUIDELINES, pg 6**
- **ADDITIONAL STAFF GUIDELINES, pg 8**

ELEMENTARY

In order to follow expert medical advice available to us today, we have decided upon the following at the elementary level:

- **All who visit our buildings, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks at all times while inside all Westside Community Schools buildings.**
 - This supports our top two goals: the safety of all students and staff and maintaining in-person learning.
 - Following Douglas County Health contact tracing protocols, without masks, our unvaccinated students (nearly all in elementary schools) and staff have a higher chance of quarantine,

therefore extended absences, in the event of positive cases at school. Mask usage means self monitoring for symptoms in the event of positive cases, which allows students and staff to continue learning in-person.

- Exceptions to mask rules could include those with documented medical, behavioral, or developmental circumstances that could be impaired by masks. Exceptions will be granted as required by written medical exemptions and the law.
- **This policy is in effect for all students, staff, and visitors at indoor activities at all times while inside all Westside schools.**
 - This includes groups and organizations who reserve space inside Westside district facilities, including media centers, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.
 - Visitors, spectators, and non-student participants who do not comply with this policy may be asked to leave the premises.
- Teachers/staff may remove their masks when they are alone in their classroom, working space, or building.
- Students participating in after hours sports or activities should wear masks upon entering and exiting, as well as during team/group meetings. Masks may be pulled down during strenuous activity.
- We will follow contact tracing protocol from the Douglas County Health Department if/when we have a confirmed case.
- All elementary students may use their own masks.
 - An appropriate fitting mask must fully cover the student's nose, mouth, and chin.
 - Masks will be subject to dress code compliance (no offensive, vulgar, or inappropriate language or messaging will be allowed.)
 - Face shields are not a replacement for masks but may be worn in addition to masks.
 - No bandanas or gaiters will be allowed to substitute for masks.
 - Each elementary building will have masks available for students who cannot/do not provide their own.

Back To School Events & Curriculum Nights

- **Elementary school masks requirements will be in effect for Back To School and Curriculum Nights.**
- All students, staff members, and adult visitors attending school sponsored events are required to wear masks while **inside** Westside elementary schools, regardless of vaccination status.

Cafeteria/Meals

- Students will use hand sanitizer and socially distance to the best of our ability while eating.
 - Students will have assigned seating during lunch.
- Self service will be limited to items that can be controlled, and procedures will follow building guidelines.
- All food is to be served by gloved and masked employees behind plexiglass.
- Students will be allowed to bring lunches from home.

Community Club Events

- Community Club events are optional for students, families, and staff.
- Masks are required of all students, staff and visitors attending Community Club events or other activities **inside** elementary schools when children are present.
- Vaccinated students, staff, and visitors choosing to attend Community Club events taking place **outdoors** will have the option to wear or not wear masks.
- We strongly recommend unvaccinated students, staff, and visitors wear masks at all outdoor elementary school events.

Field Trips

- Field trips may take place as they did prior to the pandemic.
- Field trips are subject to the same mask guidelines as if students/staff were inside elementary buildings.
 - Students and staff may choose to remove masks while outdoors.

Health Offices

- Two health spaces will be available for use in each building.
 - One will be designated for COVID-19 related issues. The other will be used for general health needs.

Parent-Teacher Conferences/Communication

- Families will have the option of meeting with teachers in person or through WebEx.

Visitors & Guests

- Volunteers, visitors, and mentors will be allowed in buildings during school hours. This includes parents, district contractors, and guests approved by administrators. **We will not allow visitors at breakfast or lunch for the first quarter as we monitor trends within our district.** We will re-evaluate this guideline in October.
 - All who visit our buildings, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks inside our elementary facilities.
- Regarding pick-up and dropping off materials, please follow directions from your building principal regarding vestibule access.

SECONDARY

Following the expert medical advice available to us today, we have decided on the following at the secondary level:

- **All who visit our secondary buildings, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks while inside our secondary schools.**
 - This supports our top two goals: the safety of all students and staff and maintaining in-person learning.
 - Following Douglas County Health contact tracing protocols, mask usage could allow for self-monitoring or symptoms in the event of positive cases, allowing students and staff to continue learning in-person.
 - Exceptions to mask rules could include those with documented medical, behavioral, or developmental circumstances that could be impaired by masks. Exceptions will be granted as required by written medical exemptions and the law.
 - **This policy is in effect for all students, staff, and visitors while indoors at Westside High School, WHS West Campus, and Westside Middle School, and as directed by the Superintendent.** Visitors, spectators, and non-student participants who do not comply with this policy will be asked to leave the premises.
 - Teachers/staff may remove their masks when they are alone in their classroom, working space, or building.
- We will follow contact tracing protocol from the Douglas County Health Department if/when we have a confirmed case.
- All secondary students may use their own masks.
 - An appropriate fitting mask must fully cover the student's nose, mouth and chin.
 - Masks will be subject to dress code compliance (no offensive, vulgar, or inappropriate language or messaging will be allowed.)
 - Face shields are not a replacement for masks but may be worn in addition to a mask.
 - No bandanas or gaiters will be allowed to substitute for masks.
 - Each secondary building will have masks available for students who cannot/do not provide their own.

Activities/Athletics

- Masks are required of all students, staff, and visitors for any school-sponsored event taking place **inside** Westside schools or facilities.
 - Examples include: sporting events or pep rallies taking place inside gyms and choir concerts inside our auditoriums.

- Signs will be posted at school entrances notifying visiting teams/groups/fans of these guidelines.
- Student athletes are required to wear face coverings whenever possible inside, including any time when not involved in intense, physical participation in practices and contests.
- People participating in after hours sports or activities should wear masks upon entering and exiting, as well as during team/group meetings. Masks may be pulled down during strenuous activity.
- Masks are strongly recommended for students, staff, and visitors attending any school-sponsored events taking place **outside** Westside schools or at outdoor facilities.
 - Examples include: sports events taking place on campus but outdoors, outdoor theatre productions and/or concerts, student unity events including Powder Puff, Homecoming parade, etc.
- No attendance restrictions on events.
- All athletes and coaches will be required to wear mask when bussed to games/activities

Arrival/Dismissal

- For Westside Middle School:
 - All students should be off school property by 3:30 unless working with a teacher, participating in a sponsored activity, or enrolled in the after school library program.
- For Westside High School:
 - End of day passes are allowed for 9/10 grade students.
 - No late arrival for 9/10 grade students.
 - After 3:30pm, students on campus should be doing one of the following:
 - Meeting with an individual teacher.
 - Participating in a club or activity with a sponsor/teacher.
 - Studying in an IMC area quietly until IMC closes, typically around 4:00pm. (If IMC closes and students need to continue work, they can do so in the office.)
 - Students will not be permitted to loiter/hang out in halls or the building without a reason beyond 3:30pm.

Cafeteria/Meals

- For Westside Middle School:
 - Lunch will last 30 minutes.
 - Students will eat at assigned seats with limited numbers at each table.
- For Westside High School:
 - We will socially distance to the best of our ability utilizing traditional and non-traditional eating spaces and staggered eating schedules.
 - 10/11 grade students will eat during even mods (4, 6, 8, and 10).
 - 9/12 grade students will eat during odd mods (5, 7, 9, and 11).
 - 5 people per table in the Courtyard.
- All food is to be served by gloved and masked employees behind plexiglass.
- Students will be allowed to bring lunches from home.

Extended Absences

- Access to student assignments will be available while students are absent. Teachers will update materials used in class and assignment information daily.

Lockers

- Lockers will be used for the 2021/22 school year at the secondary level.

Outdoor Activities

- We envision outdoor activities (PE, marching band, etc.) to be mask free as much as possible when social distancing and other important safety measures can be properly accommodated.

Passing Periods

- For Westside Middle School:
 - Separate passing periods exist for 7th and 8th grade students.
- For Westside High School:
 - The landing is one-way up and north. No entry from 230-266 and 300 hallways.
 - All other hallways are two-way.

Seating Charts

- Secondary teachers will be required to maintain accurate seating charts for contact tracing. Seating charts will be kept on file with administration.

Social Distancing

- The CDC recommends maintaining a social distance of three feet between people who are not fully vaccinated, combined with indoor mask wearing.

Visitors & Guests

- Visitors/Volunteers/Mentors will be allowed in buildings during school hours.
 - All who visit our buildings, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks while inside all district facilities.
 - At arrival/check in, the visitor will need to indicate his/her destination. Visitors should not deviate from the path.

GENERAL

Administrative and Support Buildings

- All who visit and/or work in our buildings, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks while inside all Westside Community Schools buildings. **This includes the ABC Administration Building and visitors attending Board of Education or other public meetings.**
 - For those who work in offices and cubicles, masks may be removed while you are in the privacy of your own workspace. Masks must be worn at all other times in district buildings.
 - Facilities staff members working in buildings including warehouses and our Service Center, may remove their masks due to physical labor and lack of air conditioning.

Building Engineering

- Continue to deep clean dedicated facility entry/exit points.
- Secure all facility entry/exit points as needed.
- Continue to work to increase air flow through facilities, where possible, while also maximizing clean air recirculation through appropriate filtering/sterilization methods.
- Continue to optimize the use of outside air, to include keeping as many windows open as possible throughout our facilities.
- As of the start of the 21/22 school year, we do not plan to have plexiglass in our lunchroom areas, but we do plan to continue to de-densify and watch our space as much as we can when we can.

Bussing

- Drivers and students will be expected to follow Federal Transportation Guidelines until they expire.
- Drivers will be supplied with masks, which must be worn by all staff members and students, while inside the vehicle.
- All student athletes and participants, as well as coaches, will be required to wear mask when bussed to games/activities

Communication

- To be as transparent as possible regarding positive COVID-19 cases in our district, we will once again be sending staff and families emails if/when a positive case in your building is reported to the district.
 - Note: we report/share all positive student/staff cases reported to us, even if those individuals have not physically been in attendance.
- We will update all numbers on the Westside COVID-19 dashboard on the district website, www.westside66.org; this information is updated daily.
- For questions regarding COVID-19, please email feedback@westside66.net. We will do our best to respond to all messages within 72 hours.

Contact Tracing Guidelines

- Westside will follow contact tracing protocols issued by the Douglas County Health Department.

Events

- Masks are required of all students, staff and visitors for any event taking place **inside** Westside schools or facilities.
 - Examples include: sporting events and pep rallies taking place **inside** our gyms, and choir/band concerts **inside** our auditoriums.
 - Students participating in after hours sports or activities should wear masks upon entering and exiting, as well as during team/group meetings. Masks may be pulled down during strenuous activity involved in practices, games and/or performances.
 - Signs will be posted at school entrances notifying visiting teams/groups/fans of these guidelines.
- Masks are strongly recommended for students, staff, and visitors attending any school-sponsored events taking place **outside** Westside schools or facilities.
 - Examples include: sports events taking place on campus but outdoors, outdoor theatre productions and/or concerts, student unity events including Powder Puff, Homecoming parade, etc.
- No attendance restrictions on events.

Extended Campus Learning

- **Westside Community Schools does not plan to provide Extended Campus Learning for the 2021/22 school year.**
- Our data suggests that for a vast majority of our students, in-person learning is, by far, the most effective format for learning.

Hand Washing/Hand Sanitizing

- We will remain committed to continue with frequent hand sanitizing and washing, particularly when using shared materials.
- We will follow sanitation protocols put into place during 2020/21.
- Students will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer and wash their hands frequently throughout the day.

Medical Waivers

- Requests for an exemption from student mask usage on a medical basis must be signed by a pediatrician or medical professional. Westside Community Schools reserves the right to verify that authorization by contacting the doctor/office involved.

Pre-Screening For Students

- We will not conduct student screenings at school, based on repeated and consistent advice from medical experts. Parents should screen children at home for cough, chills, fever, shortness of breath, muscle pains, loss of taste/smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fever, and/or contact with a COVID-19 positive patient in the last three weeks.
- We will continue to provide a link on our website/app to take the Symptom Screener at home when concerned about COVID-19.

Religious Waivers

- Waivers to request an exemption from **student** mask usage for religious reasons will be reviewed by Westside district leadership and legal counsel. Westside Community Schools reserves the right to deny these requests while still supporting the needs of all students to the best of our ability. **No exemptions to the mask requirement will be granted to parents or visitors to District buildings on religious grounds.**

Rentals & Reservations

- This policy is in effect for all students, staff, and visitors at indoor activities at all times while **inside** all Westside schools.
 - This includes groups and organizations who reserve space inside Westside district facilities, including media centers, gymnasiums, cafeterias and the Westside Community Center.
 - Students participating in after hours sports or activities should wear masks upon entering and exiting, as well as during team/group meetings. Masks may be pulled down during strenuous activity.
 - Visitors, spectators, and non-student participants who do not comply with this policy may be asked to leave the premises.
- Vaccinated students, staff, and visitors attending meetings or events on Westside Community Schools property but taking place **outdoors** will have the option to wear or not wear masks.
 - This includes groups and organizations who reserve space on our playgrounds, green space, and athletic fields.
 - We strongly recommend unvaccinated students, staff, and visitors wear masks at all facilities.

Testing Guidelines

- If you are waiting for results of a COVID-19 test, please do not send your student to school.
- We DO NOT accept at home testing results as proof of positive or negative. All COVID-19 tests must be from a community testing site, physicians/urgent care clinic, or pharmacy (CVS, Walgreens, Kohll's).
 - For information regarding testing locations, click here:
<https://www.douglascountyhealth.com/109-covid-19/773-where-to-get-tested>

School Calendar

- We will follow the traditional school calendar, posted on the District website at www.westside66.org.
- Elementary start time is 8:30am
- Secondary start time is 8:00am
- We will follow traditional Wednesday early release times and all other standard dismissal times.

Staff Trainings

- School nurses, health aides, and front office administrative assistants are participating in COVID-19 training with local medical experts.
- We will have mandatory training for substitute teachers that we are adding to our staff.

Water Fountains

- No mouth drinking from fountains.
 - We will continue to convert water fountains to water filling stations, which is more eco-friendly and helps us work towards our goal of being more green.
- Students bring their own water bottles.

STAFF

Masks

- Masks are now required of ALL PreK-12 students **and staff members** while inside Westside Community Schools buildings and facilities.
 - This now includes staff meetings/PLC time.

- Teachers/staff may remove their masks when they are alone in their classroom, working space, or building.
- For those who work in offices and cubicles, masks may be removed while you are in the privacy of your own workspace. Masks must be worn at all other times in district buildings, and/or when a colleague enters your office or work area.
- Facilities staff members working in buildings including warehouses and our Service Center, may remove their masks due to physical labor and lack of air conditioning.
- Staff should observe 6 feet of social distancing between one another while eating inside when masks are removed. This guideline is in place to minimize quarantine in the event of a positive case.
- Staff members may choose their own masks, following our Employee Handbook guidelines for professional attire. Staff members who need a mask will be provided one by their supervisor.

Touch Surface Cleaning

- Buildings/staff will be provided with cleaning wipes to touch surface clean areas throughout the day.
 - Staff members with health concerns (pregnancy, etc.) regarding sanitizing wipes may contact their building leader or Facilities leaders to access a different type of cleaning product.

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We intend to make/share decisions every few weeks and will notify families/staff. We will make necessary adjustments by following updated DHMs and recommendations from local and state level medical professionals. We are making decisions based on information we have available.