

# ENGAGE. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

September 27, 2021

**\*Why is there a need to change the Re-Entry plan?**

Based on data and trends, we are experiencing a marked increase in the number of individuals who are testing positive for COVID-19. These increases are concerning as we see the virus spread rapidly between individuals-especially students. Additionally, as more students test positive, the number of close contacts who must quarantine is growing exponentially, resulting in large groups of students having to quarantine.

**\*What data and feedback are you using to drive the need to re-evaluate the Re-Entry Plan?**

-From August 21, 2020 to May 21, 2021 (the entire school year last year), North Newton saw **87 positive students and staff** (37 staff members and 50 students).

-From August 13, 2021 to Friday, September 24, 2021, North Newton has seen **95 positive students and staff** (19 staff members and 76 students), in 6 short weeks.

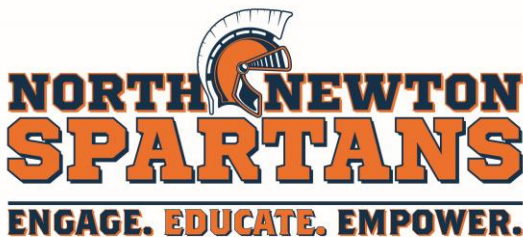
-Quarantined students can make up to twice the number of those out for illness, medical appointments and all other student absences combined.

**\*What changes is the Board considering making regarding the Re-Entry plan?**

The Indiana Department of Health has recently given schools latitude to implement mask requirements which allow close contacts of positive individuals to monitor for symptoms if everyone is masked (9-3-21 ISHD guidance). To avoid significant numbers of students and staff to quarantine, North Newton will consider implementation of the following:

*If a building reaches 1% positive for COVID-19, masks will be required for everyone (vaccinated and un-vaccinated) in the building for at least 30 days from the last documented positive case that required contact tracing. Close contacts within 3 feet of positive case will be notified to monitor for symptoms for 14 days. If symptoms develop, individuals will isolate and get tested, whether fully vaccinated or not. Applies to the classroom setting only. Does not apply to high-risk activities such as lunch, band, choir or extra-curriculars (ISHD 9-3-21). If individual is a close contact to a positive in non-classroom settings, they would need to quarantine. This plan will continue to be regularly updated with the school board as necessary.*

Students will still be required to wear masks on all school buses since there is a federal mask mandate in place. Mask breaks will take place during lunch, PE, choir, band and during extra curriculars when engaged in strenuous activities. If, at the end of



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the 30 day period, the building percentage is below the 1%, all individuals will be able to remove masks. In the event there is a 1% positive case in the building reached again, then masks would be required for a 30 day period. This plan is school building specific and relies on all students and adults wearing masks.

**\*Why set the bar at 1% positivity?**

For each COVID-19 positive student or individual, there can be up to 20 or 25 students who would need to be quarantined, but is dependent upon the activities the students are in and the number of classes. For some of our smallest buildings, 1% would be 2 positives in the 30 day span. For the junior/senior high school, the 1% threshold would be 5 positives in a 30 day span. A higher positivity will have less of an impact on the numbers who would need to quarantine. Our goal is to keep students in school.

**\*Is it possible my school would not have to wear masks?**

YES! It is possible that some schools may stay under the 1% threshold and may not have to wear masks. Or schools may start out wearing masks, but would be able to remove them when they have went below the 1% threshold.

**\*When will students know masks would be required?**

If approved, any building that has met the 1% positivity for COVID-19 with infected individuals within the last 30 days, masks will be implemented Monday, October 4, 2021. Building principals, health aides and the superintendent will evaluate positivity numbers each week with any mask change being implemented on the following Monday.

**\*Can students take masks off if they are in the classroom facing forward?**

Unfortunately, students would need to wear their masks in the classroom without taking a break, per the ISDH guidance, in order to not quarantine for being a close contact.

**\*Why can't we continue to do ELearning during quarantine?**

We could continue to have students engage in ELearning during quarantine, however students are missing a significant amount of instruction when quarantining. Such interruptions continue to be difficult for students catch up and get ahead with their peers. Teachers and administrators want students in school! A mask requirement is our best chance at staying in school.