



GLEN LAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

“Anchored in Strength”

August 18, 2021

Dear Glen Lake School Families,

The 2021-2022 school year begins on Tuesday, September 7. We are excited for another great year. Our district theme this year is ***Anchored in Strength***. The theme supports all the hard work and dedication our students, staff, and families have done and will continue to do in order to provide the best possible education.

This letter contains a lot of really important information. Thank you in advance for finding some time to read, review, and reflect on this communication.

As we are all aware, COVID-19 is not completely out of the picture and we will continue to provide you with the latest updates from our public health professionals. Health and safety always comes first for our Lakers. We will not let this health crisis and politics distract us from teaching and learning. We will continue to monitor county vaccination percentages, caseload, trends, and current number of positive cases and quarantines at Glen Lake simultaneously with current recommendations from CDC, AAP, MDHHS, MIOSHA, BLDHD, Munson Healthcare, and local Pediatricians to drive possible future decisions. You can access this information following these links:

- [MI Safe Start Map](#)
- [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#)
- [Michigan.gov COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard](#)

It is our collective responsibility to do everything we can to mitigate the spread of the virus and avoid having to quarantine students through contact tracing. We want our students in school every day for face-to-face instruction. This is proven to be the best way possible for them to learn, connect, and build relationships. We all know that the large majority of students do not do as well in an online, virtual environment. Kids need to be with friends, interacting, having fun, and being part of their Laker family.

Our top priorities are:

- 1) To ensure the health, welfare, and safety of our students, staff, and school community,
- 2) To remain in person and minimize disruptions to the learning environment
- 3) To protect our school community using the most current and authoritative mitigation strategies at our disposal

We are working diligently to ensure there are multiple ways we can navigate the pandemic for safe, in-person learning until the vaccine is available for children under 12 years of age. Those strategies include:

- Encourage vaccination
- Wear masks that cover the mouth and nose
- Physical distancing as best possible
- Use of outdoor spaces for instruction
- Frequent outdoor mask breaks
- Seating charts and appropriately spaced desks
- Cohorting students whenever possible
- Frequent hand-washing
- Sanitizing common surfaces
- Increase ventilation
- Self-monitoring for symptoms
- Rapid or non-antigen testing

As of today, Wednesday, August 18, 2021, we plan to begin the school year following the **moderate risk level** protocols found below under the **yellow** heading. These mitigation strategies are fluid, meaning they are likely to change over the course of the school year as we follow the data mentioned above.

Risk Level: LOW Standard Mitigation
<p>Masks are optional, but encouraged for those who are not vaccinated. Masking is required for all approved guests who enter by appointment during the school day.</p> <p>Masks required on all public transportation – including school busses & SUV's.</p> <p>Monitor for symptoms at home prior to entering the school.</p> <p>Seating charts in classrooms.</p> <p><i>* Lunch plans are currently To Be Discussed & Determined.</i></p> <p>Standard mitigation procedures in place – physical distancing where possible, frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, routine cleaning protocols, and the like.</p> <p>Guests are not permitted inside during school hours until all students have the opportunity to be vaccinated. The building is open and available following the conclusion of the school day.</p> <p>After-school indoor activities => Optional masking, but strongly recommended for ages 12 and older. Required for students (and everyone associated with the group) if 11 years old or younger.</p>

**Risk Level:
MODERATE
Precautionary Mitigation**

Universal masking required indoors during normal school hours.

Masks required on all public transportation – including school busses & SUV's.

Monitor for symptoms at home prior to entering the school.

Seating charts in classrooms.

** Lunch plans are currently To Be Discussed & Determined.*

Standard mitigation procedures in place – physical distancing where possible, frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, routine cleaning protocols, and the like.

Guests not permitted inside during school hours until all students have the opportunity to be vaccinated. The building is open and available following the conclusion of the school day.

After-school indoor activities => Optional masking, but strongly recommended for ages 12 and older. Required for students (and everyone associated with the group) if anyone is 11 years old or younger.

**Risk Level:
HIGH
Full Mitigation**

Universal masking required while on campus (except eating & possibly outdoors) and in school transportation.

Guests not permitted inside during school hours until all students have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Building may likely be closed after school hours depending on the severity of High risk.

Enhanced cleaning, disinfecting, ventilation, and all other COVID-19 mitigation protocols.

Weekly rapid testing for student-athletes & coaches likely, should sports continue and not be paused.

Other protocols likely, similar to the 2020-2021 school year.

**The Superintendent, in consultation with the Glen Lake Board of Education, reserves the right to alter the plan, criteria, or risk level at their discretion. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), the State of Michigan, and Benzie-Leelanau Health Department (BLDHD) orders supersede this plan. This document will remain a work in progress and we will remain flexible and fluid depending on future data and recommendations.*

Considerations:

- Following [CDC](#), [MDHHS](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [local health departments](#), [local pediatricians](#), Munson (140 Physicians - TCAPS), and [MIOSHA](#) guidance. For more information visit: [MI Safe Start Data Tracking](#); [Northwest Michigan Health Department Jurisdiction Data](#).

- One-building district with non-vaccinated elementary students mixed with other vaccinated 12-19 year olds.
- Vaccination rates among Leelanau County school aged children: 12-15 yr. olds = 58% (initial) & 48% (completed) and 16-19 year olds = 70.5% (initial) & 65% (completed) [as of 8/16/21]. Herd immunity starts at 70%; higher for the Delta variant.
- Delta variant more contagious than original strain, and new COVID infections predominantly among unvaccinated.
- Local rates of infection have increased with hopeful stabilization or decline soon!
- [Many Michigan colleges are requiring vaccines and masks.](#)
- Personal responsibility vs. mandates requires us to look out for each other and the entirety of the school community, both vaccinated and unvaccinated.
- Masking and vaccinations worked in the spring. Mitigation protocols were relaxed when numbers dropped, and we will be flexible and fluid as the numbers decline once again.
- Vaccinated individuals can spread and become sick with the Delta variant, albeit less severely; MDHHS recommends PCR testing 5 days post-exposure.
- This plan provides flexibility for learning based on locally determined and regionally-based metrics, with a recognition that the district may have to move between levels at various times throughout any given time period, but will be adjusted and amended as needed, or as mandates or recommendations evolve, in consultation with BLDHD and other health care organizations.

COVID-19 Quarantine Protocol:

As of now the quarantine guidelines from the BLDHD have not changed from what they were at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. This does not mean that they won't change at some point during the 2021-2022 school year as they changed multiple times last school year. Below is information from the BLDHD at the end of the school year last year with the most up-to-date quarantine guidelines. This guidance is only for in the classroom, any exposure outside of the classroom (i.e. sports, cafeteria, events, etc.) will continue to follow the withstanding quarantine guidance.*

- The "Close Contact" definition: Someone who has been within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
 - If a student's exposure occurred only in the classroom with strict mitigation measures and while both index case and close contact were masked and sitting at least three feet but less than six feet apart, the local health department and school district can consider reducing the need to quarantine.

- However, there is a requirement that all students/staff meeting the definition of a close contact as outlined by the CDC, **must be notified of this exposure.**
 - What does that mean for you (the school)?
 - The school will contact trace each confirmed/probable case for close contacts as defined by the CDC. For every close contact, the school will note which contact is within 0-3 feet and which close contact is greater than 3 feet.
 - The school will contact all close contacts 3 feet and less per current process as they will continue to be required to quarantine both in and out of the school setting for 10 days, and closely monitor symptoms for a total of 14 days.
 - The school will provide the entire list of close contacts (0-6 feet) to BLDHD. For students greater than 3 feet from the index case, a **parent email needs to be included** on the document.
 - BLDHD will notify all students/staff that were greater than 3 feet (up to 6 feet) of their exposure. Education on precautions will be given. So long as they are asymptomatic, the students/staff will still be able to continue school activities and will not be placed in quarantine. They will also monitor their symptoms closely for 14 days.
- Reminder: there are two groups of people who are exempted from quarantine following exposure to someone who is COVID-19 positive:
 - Individuals who have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (i.e., over two weeks have passed from receipt of the second dose in a two-dose vaccine series, or from receipt of a single-dose vaccine) if they have remained asymptomatic since their last exposure to COVID-19.
 - Individuals previously diagnosed with COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine if they: (1) have recovered from COVID-19 within the previous three months, measured from the date of symptom onset (or, if asymptomatic, the date of the first positive test); and (2) are currently asymptomatic.

Q&A:

What might be the basis for universally masking to start the school year?

Currently, the professional health care organizations of the CDC, AAP, MDHHS, MIOSHA, BLDHD, Munson Healthcare, and local Pediatricians all recommend universal masking to begin the school year. **Our top priorities are:**

1. *Ensure the health, welfare, and safety of our students, staff, and school community,*
2. *Remain in person and minimize disruptions to the learning environment, and*
3. *Protect our school community using the most current and authoritative mitigation strategies at our disposal.*

When can we expect to go mask optional?

Our process will remain fluid as trends and data are monitored. Using the metrics above, we will consider next steps when we feel comfortable doing so based on the compilation of metrics utilized. Much of this could depend on the availability of vaccines for the 11 & under age group.

If kids under 12 are not able to get the vaccine yet, does that put us at moderate or high risk?

We will begin & remain at moderate risk, with proper cleaning protocol, until a mandate is in place and/or the BLDHD advises us that our school community is in a high risk position.

What percentage of students will need to be vaccinated before we can move to low risk?

Health care and infectious disease professionals tell us herd immunity is 70%. Currently, none of the *student* populations in Leelanau County are at herd immunity. Percentage of vaccination is only one of the metrics that we will use simultaneously with other metrics as noted below.

Are we using our school's vaccination rates, the county, or the region?

We will focus more on county data at this point, and school data when we are able and once school begins. County vaccination data is currently the most readily available. Reports by school will require parent consent and are also cumbersome. School-specific data is not accessible at this time.

What recommendations should we be anticipating from our local health department regarding masks and distancing?

The BLDHD currently supports universal masking just as all other health organizations currently do, along with all other mitigation strategies that we are already very used to. We will remain closely connected to the BLDHD to monitor changes in data, trends, cases & quarantines at Glen Lake, and the like.

Recent Survey:

A survey was sent to families in the afternoon on Friday, August 13, 2021, and closed Monday, August 16, 2021, around noon. The survey was sent to returning families and to those families of new or entering students who were entered into the student database system prior to the survey being sent. Students/families who have not yet been entered into the system by that time did not receive, thus, did not have a chance to respond.

The survey was not conducted scientifically as it allowed multiple responses from each family and did not give families enough information about quarantine procedures and other mitigation strategies before asking the one question on the survey.

Glen Lake received 231 responses from Secondary families and 209 responses from Elementary families. It is important to note, however, that there were double submissions due to multiple contacts in our database, therefore, 440 is not an accurate representation of all Laker families. The survey does, however, give us some important information about how families are feeling about one of the many mitigation strategies planned for this school year, wearing masks.

The survey was not a vote. The intention of the survey was to help us understand how we can best respond to and support our students upon their return to in-person learning at school. Find the result of the survey [here](#).

As the mask debate continues please remember that some of our children may be struggling with the many mixed messages they are hearing from friends, family, school, social media, and the news. Putting them in the middle of adult disagreements may cause confusion, anxiety, or have a significant impact on their emotional health. We encourage you to reach out to our principals or counselors if you feel like your child may need support in understanding our safety protocols before returning to school.

Please know that we will continue to abide by school policies, guidelines and processes, and all students will be expected to respect and practice masking.

Glen Lake is a school community that perseveres through crises and adversity together. Now is not the time for division among our school family, it is a time for us to demonstrate unity and respect. Together, we are ***Anchored in Strength***.

Regards,

Glen Lake Board of Education & Executive Team