

Dear WCSC Families,

Earlier today, we learned that the spread of the COVID 19 virus in Warrick County has continued to increase. This upward trend is reflected in our 2-metric score of 2.5, which now puts Warrick as one of seven counties in Indiana with a score of 2.5 or higher. Our updated seven-day positivity rate is 13.06%, compared to the state rate of 8.4%.

We have made the difficult decision of requiring masks to be worn inside all WCSC buildings for at least the month of August. Our plan, which was developed in consultation with the Warrick County Health Department, is to continue to evaluate the data on a weekly basis, knowing that as soon as we see a clear trend that the spread and positivity rate are going in the right direction, we will take the masks off. Our hope is that this surge will peak by the end of the month, or shortly thereafter, and we can pivot back to a more normal environment, free of masks.

Like all of you, we want our students and teachers to see each other's faces as they forge those important relationships that will carry on through the school year. This is a short-term strategy that is being implemented to keep our students safe and to avoid any disruptions to in-person learning throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

Here are the specific reasons for making this decision:

1. We will do anything in our power to keep our students, staff, and families healthy. We recognize that masks are inconvenient, and all of us were hoping that we had put masks behind us. However, we believe that this surge is going to be much shorter than others. Doing something inconvenient in the short-run is a worthy investment to protect our students and the school community in the long-run.
2. When our students are without masks, we must contact trace at six feet. Practically speaking, this means that when an individual in the school tests positive for the virus, our administrators must identify close contacts for quarantining as other students or adults who spend at least 15 minutes with the infected individual within a radius of six feet. Last year, the six-foot contact tracing radius forced us to send hundreds of healthy students home as a precautionary measure. By wearing masks during this surge, we can move that radius to three feet. This will dramatically reduce the number of potentially healthy students who would have to be sent home if we were still following the six-foot rule. It also supports our commitment to keeping schools open for in-person learning and other school activities.
3. When our doors are open on any given day, we have over 11,000 children and adults learning and working in our schools. In a county of 60,000 residents, what happens in our buildings has the potential to impact many of our residents. By doing everything we can to limit the spread of the virus, we are doing our part to keep our community healthy.

We do not intend to cancel the school traditions we have all been looking forward to throughout the summer. We will still have back-to-school nights, extracurricular activities, and nearly all other events. When students and staff are outside, masks will not be required. We are simply asking anyone who comes inside our schools to wear a mask until we see the positivity rate and spread of the virus moving to a downward trend.

Thank you in advance for your support. These are difficult decisions that undoubtedly will draw criticism from those who do not agree. We make the decisions that we believe are best for our students and staff and we move forward. You can expect to get additional details from your child's school in the coming days.

Todd Lambert