

## **BKW Layered Mitigation School Opening Plan: Fall 2021**

The Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District is planning for a full return to school in September, providing a full academic program and a wide range of extracurricular and athletic offerings for all students. Our priority is to have all students attend in-person instruction for the 2021-22 school year. The district will employ a layered mitigation approach, including strategies ranging from masking and social distancing, to facilities cleaning and hygiene, to contact tracing and quarantining, to HVAC (ventilation) and the provision of food services, to surveillance testing and vaccination access. Asymptomatic spread makes this virus difficult to find. As a public institution, we must consider everyone in the community and minimize the risk for all. By individually doing our part to keep everyone safe and healthy, we will ensure academic, social, and emotional growth of our students, as well as the safety of the community.

This plan is not a simple matter of choice (preference) versus constraints (mandates). Instead, it is about choosing the appropriate best practices to manage the various stages and implications of COVID-19. Over the past year, we learned how to manage the virus effectively by using many layers of strategies aimed to prevent infection and transmission of the virus in our schools. Having a layered mitigation plan is a measured approach to making layered, tiered adjustments (nuanced) to mitigation strategies based on the **transmission or rate of infections**, ranging from **Low Community Transmission**>>**Moderate Community Transmission**>>**Substantial Community Transmission**>>**High Community Transmission**. In order to make decisions about strategy adjustment in response to the virus, regional and local data will be assessed on a regular basis. Whenever possible and appropriate, any adjustments to mitigation strategies will be made according to the most local data available.

The intent of the layered, tiered approach is to find and maintain a balance between **prioritizing** health and safety of students and staff, **supporting** the social, emotional, and mental health of students and staff, and keeping as many students and staff in school as possible. This tiered mitigation plan will be fluid, and strategies will change if the data indicates they should change. If the data indicates lower infection or transmission, restrictions could be loosened. If the data indicates the virus is spreading, adjustments may become more restrictive. It is important for students and families to know that there could be changes in strategies based on the data, and so, the plan is not an either/or document, but rather a guiding document in a shifting and changing environment. We will consistently review practices to ensure we are meeting our objectives.

**We recognize the clear views on masking and vaccination that exist in the community, and that there may be times of strong disagreement on implementation. The intent of this plan is to make the safest choices for our students, staff, and the community at-large, making it possible for all students to attend in-person instruction and avoid quarantining in the event of a positive case in their classroom. Regardless of positions held on these issues, we can all rally around safety and learning.**

Safety leads to increased in-person attendance, which leads to increased student growth and support. The District seeks to be responsible in terms of mitigating the spread of COVID, while balancing the provision of educational and extracurricular activities with the preservation of health and safety. On Friday, August 27, the NYS Department of Health issued a directive to NYS schools requiring masks to be worn in school by anyone over 2 years of age, including students, staff, any visitors, and any contractors. The district will comply with the mandate as directed, as it is obligated to do so by law. The masking plan has been amended to reflect the DOH mandate in areas where it applies.

Please review the “Layered Mitigation Plan” below to gain understanding of how the plan will be implemented.

	Mitigation Protocol	Low Community Transmission	Moderate Community Transmission	Substantial Community Transmission	High Community Transmission
	Total New Cases per 100,000 in 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	>100
	% of Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAATs) that are positive during the past 7 days	0-4.99%	5-7.99%	8-9.99%	>10.00%
1	COVID-19 Vaccines	Encourage all eligible-not mandated	Encourage all eligible-not mandated	Encourage all eligible-not mandated	Encourage all eligible-not mandated
2	COVID-19 Testing-(surveillance, symptomatic) Conducted in partnership with AC DOH	No Surveillance Testing Parent consent for potential positive testing	No surveillance testing Parent consent for potential positive testing	No surveillance testing Parent consent for potential positive testing	Surveillance Testing at 20% per week Parent consent for any testing of students
3	Facemasks (indoors/outdoors)  • Note: Any student or staff member may	Required for all staff and students  Regular and appropriate mask breaks for those	Required for all staff and students  Regular and appropriate mask breaks for those	Required for all staff and students  Regular and appropriate mask breaks	Required by staff and students  Regular and appropriate mask breaks

	<b>choose wear a mask at any time outdoors without repercussion or consequence</b>	using masks Outdoor masking optional	using masks Outdoor masking optional	Outdoor masking optional	Outdoor masking when 3' social distancing cannot be met
4	<b>Use of plastic barriers</b>	Plastic barriers used on desktops	Plastic barriers used on desktops	Plastic barriers used on desktops	Plastic barriers used on desktops
5	<b>Monitoring Community and School-Based Transmission</b>	Ongoing	Ongoing; weekly benchmark	Ongoing; weekly benchmark	Ongoing; weekly benchmark
6	<b>Physical Distancing (indoors)</b>	N/A	3' physical distancing	3' distancing <u>or</u> masked (to greatest extent possible)	3' distancing <u>and</u> masked (to the greatest extent possible)
7	<b>School Visitors</b>	Minimal Restrictions; by appointment	Minimal Restrictions; by appointment	Moderate Restrictions; official business only; strictly limited "outside group" use	Strict restrictions; official business only; no "outside group" use of facilities
8	<b>Handwashing, Hand Sanitizer, and Respiratory Etiquette</b>	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged
9	<b>Contact tracing &amp; Quarantine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted by local DOH</li> <li>• Process predicated on masking and distancing protocols</li> </ul>	Yes; 6' close contact perimeter and 10-day quarantine.	Yes; 6' close contact perimeter and 10-day quarantine.	Yes; 6' close contact perimeter and 10-day quarantine.	Yes; 6' close contact perimeter and 10-day quarantine.
10	<b>Staying Home When Sick (Staff and Students)</b>	Yes for all students and staff	Yes for all students and staff	Yes for all students and staff	Yes for all students and staff
11	<b>Return to School Protocols (following COVID illness)</b>	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free
12	<b>Return to Work Protocols (following COVID illness)</b>	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free	Complete 10 day isolation; fever free 24 hours; symptom free

13	<b>Cleaning and Disinfection</b>	Strongly encouraged to perform daily Routine Cleaning and daily Disinfection of moderate and high-touch surfaces	Strongly encouraged to perform daily Routine Cleaning and daily Disinfection of moderate and high-touch surface	Strongly encouraged to perform daily Routine Cleaning and daily Disinfection of moderate and high-touch surfaces	Strongly encouraged to perform daily Routine Cleaning and daily Disinfection of moderate and high-touch surfaces
14	<b>Physical Education, Recess, and Performing Arts</b>	Masks required indoors; masks optional outdoors	3 feet distancing <u>and</u> masked indoors; masks optional outdoors	3 feet distancing <u>and</u> masked indoors; masks optional outdoors	3' <u>and</u> masked indoors; masks used when 3 feet physical distancing not possible outdoors
15	<b>Ventilation and Air Quality</b>	Increased fresh air circulation (mechanical, open windows, open doors)	Increased fresh air circulation (mechanical, open windows, open doors)	Increased fresh air circulation (mechanical, open windows, open doors)	Increased fresh air circulation (mechanical, open windows, open doors)
16	<b>Transportation</b>	Required masking; windows open for air circulation	Required masking; seating chart used; parent encouraged to drive students; windows open for air circulation	Required masking; seating chart; windows; parent encouraged to drive student; windows open for air circulation	Required masking; seating chart used; parent encouraged to drive student; windows open for air circulation
17	<b>Lunch in Cafeteria (Note- Elementary students will eat lunch in classrooms for the start of the school year)</b>	No restrictions	6' social distancing	6' social distancing	6' social distancing
18	<b>Athletics</b>	3' distancing and mask required for indoor sports  Health monitoring for athletes	3 feet distancing and mask required for indoor sports  Health monitoring for athletes	3 feet distancing and mask required for indoor sports  Home spectators only at events  Health monitoring for athletes	3 feet distancing <u>and</u> masked at all times;  Potential Rapid Testing for unvaccinated students in High Risk Sports; Two (2) Home spectators only per athlete at events  Health monitoring for athletes

## Notes:

1. To be clear on the goal with this plan- 1) Every student in our district should be in attendance, in-person, every day. 2) Once in attendance, we are seeking to ensure that students stay in school 3) Masking and distancing protocols that do not meet Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance according to the local health department could result in more extensive quarantining in the event of positive COVID cases 4) Masking and distancing protocols which meet CDC guidance can mean fewer quarantined students in the event of positive COVID cases, less disruption of in-person learning, and less disruption for families
2. Daily health attestations by students and staff are no longer required.
3. On August 27, districts were notified by NYS DOH that Masks are required to be worn in schools by all students, staff, visitors and contractors, regardless of vaccination status, until further notice.
4. Remote learning is available to those who have a significant medical issue, as documented by a physician. The remote option will be through Capital Region BOCES and will be a full year commitment if qualified. Teachers of those classes may be from other regional districts participating in the program. District will review requests on a case by case basis. If you believe your student qualifies for a medically based remote option, please contact your building administrator.
5. The four categories for “community transmission” have been developed by the CDC. They are benchmarks by which counties are classified. They have been included in this chart to provide understanding as to current designation procedures. The data criteria can, and will, be used in application to local town and school level infection and transmission rates. We will attempt to follow local town and school level infection and transmission rates to make decisions for weekly protocols. Doing so will allow the District to make more relevant decisions for application of protocols based on our most local situation on infection and transmission. It is also important to remember, the District has approximately 75 students who travel to various parts of the Capital Region to participate in their educational program, and each one is in classes with students from all over the region, This means we must also remember that we are not fully isolated from the rest of the region, even though our local data may be very different.
6. As we move into the school year, and begin to make the weekly data analysis, the determination for the weekly protocols will be made by the Superintendent of Schools, as the COVID Coordinator. We will communicate the status weekly by sending a mass message to the community and posting the status on the District website.

## References and Resources:

- NYSED Health and Safety Guide to Reopen NYS Schools, see <http://www.nysed.gov/back-school/health-and-safety-guide-2021-2022-school-year>

- CDCs Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>
- Description of these levels, please see Appendix A of this document. For tracking of these levels, see <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
- Quarantining, in the K-12 classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3-6 feet of an infected student from quarantining if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>
- Mask on buses, see <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/masks/mask-travel-guidance.html>
- Screening Testing, see Part 4, at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>
- Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAATs), see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/lab/naats.html>