

Mount Vernon Families, Staff Members, and Community Members:

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has made some changes related to close contacts in positive COVID-19 cases, especially as it relates to the necessity for some to quarantine based on close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. These changes apply to schools, child care settings, and businesses. The changes include the following:

1. Close contacts of COVID-positive cases will no longer need to quarantine for 14 days if a face covering was worn consistently and correctly by the positive case and those identified as close contacts. The individual who tested positive must still isolate. The close contacts should self-monitor for symptoms.
2. Self-monitoring entails close monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms over the subsequent 14 days, staying home if any symptoms develop, and speaking with a healthcare provider about COVID-19 testing in the case of any illness.
3. If people who are self-monitoring become ill but do not get tested, they should remain home until 10 days after symptom onset.
4. People currently in quarantine may be released from quarantine if a face covering was worn consistently and correctly by the positive case and close contacts during exposure.
5. If the positive case wore a face covering, but close contacts did not, those close contacts must be quarantined.
6. If the positive case did not wear a face covering, close contacts must quarantine whether or not they wore a face covering.
7. Quarantine of close contacts will still be necessary in residential and healthcare settings.

The Iowa Department of Public Health has provided the following visual guide to assist you in understanding the new guidelines:

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/61/covid19/resources/WhenToQuarantine.pdf>

Face coverings are proven to be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, the face covering mandate will remain in place for all students, staff members, and visitors in the Mount Vernon Community School District. Masks with two layers of fabric are the preferred face covering that provide the most protection from spread of the virus. Therefore, we are encouraging all students and staff that are currently wearing a face shield only to make the move to wearing a mask. **Students or staff members wearing only a face shield or gaiter may be subject to quarantine if being determined to be in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.**

Along with wearing a face covering, we ask that everyone continue all recommended public health strategies:

- Stay home when sick.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet whenever possible.
- Wash hands frequently.

If a student or group of students is identified as being in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, it will likely not be necessary for the entire group to quarantine for 14 days as has been the case for the past few months. Anyone who is in the classroom or activity of someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus will still be contacted to allow families to determine next steps for their children. A family may choose to have a child remain out of school out of an abundance of caution, and everything will be done to assist that child in remaining engaged in learning while out of school.

Thank you for providing your feedback on the surveys regarding our current teaching and learning models. The District Administrative Team is meeting this week to discuss next steps and possible recommendations regarding remaining in the hybrid model, or moving to the traditional model of learning where students attend school five days a week. All students will also have the option to continue in, or move to, remote learning if that is their choice. The Mount Vernon Community School District School Board will meet on October 13, 2020, to discuss the recommendations of the Administrative Team. This meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m., and be held in Mount Vernon High School Performing Arts Center Lobby.

Thanks again for your patience and understanding during these challenging times.

Dr. B.