

## **Bloomington Montessori School COVID UPDATES FAQ**

### **Who decides if classrooms close?**

If there are one or more cases of COVID-19 at BMS, the administration will partner with the Indiana State Department of Health and the Monroe County Health Department to determine appropriate actions. This team will use flow charts including multiple variables developed for use by schools by the Indiana Department of Health to determine response recommendations. We will support health officials by getting them any information they need and assisting with contact tracing; it is ultimately their decision whether or not a classroom or the school should close and for how long. They are the experts and we will take their direction should a case at BMS occur. If the team determines that the recommendation decision is complicated or unclear, BMS will default to the more cautious recommendations.

In the event that a school closure is not mandated, but may be prudent, the Head of School will contact the Board to determine the best course of action.

### **What does being a “masking school” look like?**

**BMS just recently received a drop-in inspection by a representative of the Monroe County Health Department. The inspector observed all classrooms and found BMS to be a well-masked school.** This will never mean, in a school setting and especially with our youngest community members, that every person on campus is always perfectly masked. Being a well-masked school begins with setting a community intention, then building policies and instituting infrastructure to support the intention, and then including enforcement of the policy. BMS has done all of these things. We have communicated the intention to be a cautious institution and protect our students and staff from the pandemic spreading in our community to the best of our ability. We have created and implemented numerous policies (the PEOP) to support this intention. We have financially supported the intention by lowering class capacities as needed, buying desk partitions, hiring extra cleaners, and stocking extra supplies. Within this framework, 186 young humans do their best to be aware of their masks and keep them up over their noses, to not get up while they have them off to sleep/eat/drink, etc. There will always be a margin of error which requires us to enforce the policies with signage, reminders, emails home when tighter-fitting masks need to be sent, etc. We will continue to do our best to ensure everyone is masked when called for, and this will continue to be an ongoing challenge. We appreciate the huge amount of support we have received from parents in helping build this masking culture with their children.

Any unvaccinated adults will remain masked at all times, even when socially distanced, refraining from eating and drinking around others.

**Check your mask!** The ISDH explains that, especially with the Omicron variant, just wearing a mask is not enough. It must fit well, meaning it stays over the nose and mouth and does not

have gaps. Masks do not fit every face the same. In addition, the ISDH explains that the following masks are appropriate:

- Acceptable: Three-layer, tightly woven cloth masks that fit well.
- Better: Surgical grade disposable masks that fit well. Crossing the loops for a better fit on children often causes huge gaps, making the mask ineffective. Children most often require child-sized masks to achieve proper fit.
- Best: (K)N94/(K)F94 or (K)F95/(K)F94 masks that fit well.

Here are some simple steps to check if your child's mask meets mask requirements:

- It is one of the types of masks listed above.
- When your child opens and closes their mouth very wide, it still stays over the nose and mouth.
- It bends tightly around the nose-a Q-tip could not be inserted in any gap along the nose.
- The cheek seams lay flat along the face, with no gaps at the sides of the mask or under the chin. A Q-tip could not be inserted into any gaps. These gaps allow air to flow unfiltered out toward others, and also for your child to breathe unfiltered air in, decreasing safety.

### **What if a student tests positive for COVID-19?**

The student must remain home for 10 days from the first day symptoms appear AND be 24 hours fever-free without medication AND have improved respiratory symptoms. Additionally, BMS may contact the Monroe County Health Department immediately after being notified to discuss further action. In compliance with health officials' recommendations, BMS may dismiss students and most staff of one or more classrooms. Depending on exposure timelines, vaccination rates, whether the classroom has naptime, etc.; we will work with health officials to determine the recommended length of closure. This could range from a very short-term closure for deep cleaning, to a full quarantine period. As soon as the school knows of the positive case and has determined a course of action, families will be notified. The person who tested positive will not be identified, but you will get information about the extent/level of your family's personal exposure.

### **What if my student is a close-contact?**

The CDC has updated guidance for close-contact quarantine. Their new guidance is that fully vaccinated close-contacts and/or well-masked individuals who were never unmasked around the positive person do not need to quarantine but must symptom-monitor. Unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or those who are not well-masked close contacts must quarantine at home for five (5) days. Day zero is considered the day they were last exposed to the positive individual. Additionally, the close contact must be tested on day five and provide the negative lab-administered RAPID or PCR test result for return on day 6. Masking considerations may include whether children are unmasked at naptime, face shields, and proper mask fit/wearing.

BMS is using these guidelines as a new minimum requirement for quarantine. However, we also are continuing to advise a ten-day quarantine precaution if possible, with a negative test result from a test taken within days 5-7. If symptoms develop (re)test as soon as possible and

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begin isolation until confirmation is received. If positive, the isolation timeline starts with day zero being the first day of symptom onset and ends at day 10.

**What is BMS's vaccination rate?**

Currently, 90% of our staff are vaccinated against COVID-19. Student vaccination declarations will start to be collected in January and will continue to grow as more students are able to become vaccinated. The current rate is unknown.

**Is there staff mitigation testing?**

Yes. The Board approved mandated PCR COVID testing for unvaccinated staff and volunteer PCR COVID testing for vaccinated staff on November 3, 2021. Testing is completed on a weekly basis.

**What COVID-19 tests will BMS accept?**

Lab administered COVID-19 RAPID or PCR test will now be accepted. PCR TESTS ARE PREFERRED due to better accuracy, but BMS will also now accept lab-administered RAPID tests. Should symptoms continue for more than two days after receiving a negative COVID RAPID test, a second test should be administered.

**What can parents do to support BMS's PEOP?**

We could use your support with masking. What this looks like is providing several well-fitting masks and practicing good mask habits at home. Performing diligent symptom screening before school and immediately reporting illnesses and exposures, so that we can implement our mitigation protocols as soon as possible. Pursue COVID vaccination for all eligible. Bring all questions, concerns, and feedback directly to the Head of School, Quinn McAvoy, or the Assistant Head of School, Jess Davis. They are your first point of contact for all COVID related questions and are in direct contact with the Indiana State Department of Health as well as the Monroe County Health Department.

We ask families to respect privacy of each other and of staff, to model respect and community-oriented behavior for children, to have trust in the school and the community, and to trust that we are being transparent to the extent that it is possible with medical information and changing conditions.

Lastly, give us your patience and understanding as we navigate this challenge to the best of our ability.

**What is the current state of COVID?**

Currently, our county risk rating is medium-high (orange), and has continued to rise over the last few weeks. The latest variants, Delta and Omicron, are much more contagious than the variants that we saw at this time last year. We will keep doing our best to minimize the spread, but it is realistic to acknowledge that with high positive case rates and more contagious variants, it is likely that we will continue to see occasional cases. We will continue to consult with public health authorities and take quick responses for the best protection of the community.

**What is BMS doing to meet our current COVID conditions?**

BMS has purchased portable HEPA filtration units for each classroom as well as the main office. These units will be used during the school day to provide additional filtration of the air. Teachers will be vigilant regarding proper masking and handwashing and will be in communication with parents for support, if needed.

**Will kids need to stay home and be tested for every little symptom?**

This is a reasonable concern for families of children with allergies and other chronic conditions but at this time, with the Omicron variant being so transmissible, children must stay home and test if they are symptomatic. We understand how hard a child being sent home is on families, and will do our best to make prudent decisions. However, if symptoms are questionable, BMS *will* err on the side of caution to protect the community, and this may be inconvenient for parents. We will do our best to navigate this.

**How is the PEOP updated?**

Nothing any of us can do can completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission within our school community. However, our plan has been reviewed by our local health officials and found to be in alignment with the Indiana State Department of Health's best practices. Our COVID policies and practices are revised and updated as new guidance and recommendations are announced by the CDC and ISDH. We will work together as a community and do our best to keep everyone as safe as possible in a respectful and supportive environment.