

## COVID-19 Report and Discussion

*As of Tuesday, May 18, 2021*

### Vaccine for 12-15 Now Available

Wright County Public Health will be setting up vaccine clinics in all three Wright County schools before the end of the year. Belmond-Klemme is currently making plans for our clinic.

This week (May 17-21) Wright County Public Health is set to receive a shipment of the Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19. This supply is designated for youth ages 12 to 15.

Earlier this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approved Pfizer's request to allow their Covid-19 vaccine to be given to kids ages 12 to 15 on an emergency use basis, allowing states to get middle school students vaccinated before the fall. The two-dose vaccine is already authorized for use in people 16 and older.

A second clinic will be held in each school in June as the vaccine requires two doses. The plan is for students to return to the same site in 21 days to receive their second dose, even though school will be out at that time.

### CDC Loosens Mask Mandate

Late on Thursday, May 13, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) relaxed their guidance on mask wearing and social distancing for **adults who have been fully vaccinated**. The CDC stated: "Fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing."

Faculty and staff who have been fully vaccinated and are not among students may now continue without wearing a mask or social distancing. This means team meetings and break times can return to normal.

For those faculty and staff who chose not to be vaccinated, you are still asked to remain masked at all times.

The new guidance is available on the CDC website, "When You've Been Fully Vaccinated—How to Protect Yourself and Others":

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

## **Faculty and Staff are Asked to Continue to Mask**

With only 13 days left with students at the beginning of this week, faculty and staff were asked to continue to wear masks and face coverings in our classrooms and hallways. Our students are not protected as the adults are, and we need to assure them that wearing masks is the right thing to do.

School-age children are very impressionable. They follow the examples set by adults. Among their strongest role models are their teachers and other adults in their school. Modeling for students the behaviors we want them to emulate is one of our most important responsibilities.

Our students are not protected as we are. They need to remain masked until they are vaccinated, and we need to show them the way.

## **Iowa Public Health Comes Out Against Masks**

Deciding that this whole “science thing” was being entirely overblown, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) made a rogue decision late on Friday afternoon, May 14, to eliminate masks from Iowa schools. In public direction to Iowa school administrators, the IDPH wrote:

“while we acknowledge that some parents may want their child to continue to wear a cloth face covering for reasons that make sense for their family or that child’s individual health condition, we urge schools . . . to provide parents and students with the option to make their own decision about mask usage.”

This position of the IDPH received strong objection from Wright County Public Health. “I see almost no benefit of changing from (our) current plans as a result of this,” Dr. Michael McLoughlin wrote. “I don’t think it is worth the hassle of changing course and accepting even a small risk of an outbreak that takes kids out of school this close to the end.”

Wright County Public Health Director Sandy McGrath concurred stating:

“I agree, hold the course. Masks reduce risk of illness. Having a positive in a room without masks would likely spread COVID. We have more vaccine options now. It seems premature to get crazy with a week or two left.”

With the support of Wright County Public Health, the three public school districts in the county will continue with their mask mandate.

## **CDC Recommends Continued Masks in Schools**

Then only one day later, on Saturday, May 15, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) came out with its statement that masking should continue in schools. They advised schools to continue to follow the COVID-19 prevention strategies outlined in the current version of the CDC’s *Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools*.

## **Plans for August**

Recognizing first that circumstances can change very quickly as outbreaks ebb and flow and new variants of the virus emerge, we are currently planning to resume all normal operations when school resumes on August 23. We anticipate being without masks and social distancing; students will be on regular schedules and visiting their lockers between periods; desks will be in groups and clusters; and students will be eating off of plates in the cafeteria.

We base this off the following suppositions:

- A. Adults are the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, and by August 23, all adults will have either been vaccinated or made the conscious decision not to be vaccinated.
- B. The next most vulnerable group are the teenagers, and vaccinations are already underway for this group.
- C. Experts advise that approval of a vaccine for children will likely be approved this summer, indicating that all students may have had the opportunity to be vaccinated before or around the start of school.

## **August Calendar**

August 18 – 20, 2021	Back-to-school Workshop
August 19, 2021	7:00 P.M., Regular School Board Meeting
August 23, 2021	8:30 A.M., First Day of School for Students
August 27, 2021	7:00 P.M., Football home opener versus AGWSR, Ackley
September 1, 2021	Kindergarten Open Enrollment Deadline
September 6, 2021	Labor Day – No School
September 11, 2021	Patriot Day
September 17, 2021	Constitution Day
September 16, 2021	7:00 P.M., Regular School Board Meeting
September 29, 2021	1:00 P.M. Dismissal for Teacher PD