



Canton Local Schools Mask Mandate FAQs

9/1/2021

Why is Canton Local mandating masks for all students and staff?

By implementing this mandatory mask policy, we will no longer exclude students and staff from school who are identified as close contacts during the school day as long as they were wearing a mask and remain symptom-free.

Based on health department guidelines, we must quarantine any student or staff member who is not vaccinated or wearing a mask if they were in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case. This means we must exclude close contacts from school and extracurricular activities for up to 10 days.

Currently, Canton Local Schools has been notified of 26 staff or student positive cases. To put that in perspective, Canton Local did not reach 26 positive cases until November 27 of last year. In addition to the positive cases, 196 students and staff have been quarantined from in-person schooling and extracurricular activities for up to 10 days due to contact tracing. This means that approximately 10% of our students and staff have been excluded from school since we began in August.

Our data from last year suggests that our students will perform better academically if they receive in-person instruction. Therefore, we will keep our students in the building receiving in-person instruction by implementing this policy.

When does the mask mandate go into effect?

The mandate for all students will go into effect on September 7. Canton Local staff will begin wearing a mask on September 2. We highly recommend that students start wearing a mask immediately but understand that families may need time to prepare children to begin wearing a mask.

Where will this mask mandate be in effect?

The mask mandate will be in effect in all Canton Local buildings and on school buses. Students and staff will be permitted to take mask breaks if they are appropriately physically distanced of at least 6 feet from others.

The mask mandate will not be in effect outside of school buildings. This means that students, staff, and community members will not be required to wear masks if they are on our grounds but not in a building.

Examples:

- Recess
- Outdoor Sporting Event

Does this mean my child cannot be quarantined from school?

No, it does not. Your child could still be quarantined if they are identified as a close contact when not wearing a mask and not being vaccinated. While it will not completely eliminate the possibility of being quarantined, implementing this mask mandate will significantly reduce the chance of a student or staff member being quarantined.

Examples of possible quarantine scenarios include:

- Being a close contact indoors during an extracurricular activity
- Being a close contact outside of school if not vaccinated or wearing a mask
- Health department notification of a quarantine due to off-campus exposure

Will I still be notified if my child is a close contact to a positive COVID case?

Yes, as positive cases are reported we will continue to communicate with families.

- Families will be called if their child has been identified as a close contact. However, with a mask mandate in place, students who are correctly wearing a mask and are symptom-free will be allowed to remain in school (not quarantine).
- Families of children that were in a shared classroom space with a positive case, but not identified as a close contact, will be given a letter explaining a case was in proximity to their child.
- Active positive cases will be reported on the COVID dashboard on our Canton Local website.

Are there mask exemptions?

Yes, you can obtain a medical mask exemption from your doctor. Please provide the mask exemption to the front office of your child's school. If an exemption is approved this does not mean that the student or staff member is exempt from quarantine. If the individual is identified as a close contact and a mask is not worn, quarantine guidelines will be followed unless vaccination proof is shared.

What if I refuse to allow my child to wear a mask?

Unless provided with a valid medical exemption, all students and staff at Canton Local Schools will be required to wear a mask while the mask mandate is in effect. We do realize that this is a very sensitive topic for many families. If you cannot allow your child to wear a mask in school, we will work with you to enroll your child into an online program.

If my child is vaccinated, why do they have to wear a mask?

As a school system, we currently do not have a way to know who is vaccinated. Even if someone voluntarily tells us that they are vaccinated, we do not have a system in place to accurately identify who is vaccinated or unvaccinated. Additionally, we do not want to create any type of divide in our district. Our goal is to keep all of our students in school so that they can receive the best education possible without disruption. All students and staff will be required to wear a mask despite vaccination status. Canton Local Schools will not ask for your child's vaccination status, if your child is contact traced and you provide us with proof of vaccination and your child is symptom-free, they can remain in school if identified as a close contact.

When will this mask mandate end?

On September 30, we will review the data below and make a decision regarding the mask mandate:

1. Number of positive cases within Canton Local Schools
2. Number of students who would have been quarantined without a mask mandate in place.
3. Stark County and Akron Children's hospitalization numbers.