

**COVID Related Information**

**2021-2022**

This past school year, we were very fortunate to have had minimal numbers of positive COVID cases among our students and staff. As a result, we were able to keep students and staff safe and classrooms open for in-person learning. We believe this was due to a combination of several factors, including the following of guidance from local and national health officials, closely monitoring our students and staff for symptoms, parents’ support in following quarantine and isolation requirements when necessary and having a strong mitigation plan in place.

Since individuals under 12 years old are not currently eligible for COVID-19 vaccines, other prevention strategies are necessary to protect all unvaccinated individuals in schools.

Starting in March 2020, the Villa board committed to following the prevention strategies recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH). We will continue to do so to the extent possible.

To read the complete version of the CDC’s updated guidance for schools, please visit this [webpage](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#screening-testing.).

Here are some of the key recommended prevention strategies and how they will be addressed:

**Consistent and correct mask use** - On June 30, Arizona House Bill 2898 ([HB 2898](https://legiscan.com/AZ/text/HB2898/id/2422560)) passed and was signed by the governor. HB 2898 prohibits a “… school district governing board or charter governing body from requiring the use of face coverings by students or staff during school hours and on school property.” This is one main CDC recommendation the school **will not be able to follow.** However, we do strongly encourage the wearing of face coverings by our students and staff. We respect each family’s decision regarding their child’s wearing of a face covering and assure you that all students will be made to feel welcome regardless of their family’s decision. We ask everyone to support each other in this effort so that no one feels harassed or intimidated.

**Physical distancing** – We will begin the school year, keeping each classroom as a cohort with students not mixing with other classrooms. As recommended by the CDC, if one of the key prevention strategies is not able to be followed, such as the consistent wearing of face coverings, we should remove other prevention strategies one at a time. We will closely monitor for increases in the number of positive COVID cases at the school and will remove the need to cohort classrooms as soon as possible. Teachers will use Plexiglas as additional support where needed.

**Ventilation** – last year, we installed air scrubbers on several air conditioning units and purchased a portable air purification device for every classroom. Those will continue to be used.

**Handwashing and respiratory etiquette** – students and staff will continue to be vigilant about these procedures.

**Staying home when sick and getting tested** – daily health checks will be conducted at home prior to coming to school in the morning. Please monitor your child for the following symptoms and keep them home if they are experiencing any of them.

* Fever of 100 degrees or chills
* Cough
* Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
* Fatigue
* Muscle or body aches
* Headache
* New loss of taste or smell
* Sore throat
* Congestion or runny nose
* Nausea or vomiting
* Diarrhea

We have been advised by MCPHD to continue to maintain a low tolerance for illness. Students exhibiting any of the above symptoms will be isolated and sent home. Guidance regarding a return to school date and obtaining testing will be sent home with the student. Students awaiting test results must remain at home until results are obtained and return to school requirements are met.

**Contract tracing, in combination with quarantine and isolation** – We will continue to collaborate with state and local health departments, to the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. We will notify, to the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, teachers, staff, and families of students who were close contacts as soon as possible (within the same day if possible) after they are notified that someone in the school has tested positive.

**Cleaning and disinfecting** – we will continue to disinfect high-touch areas. Additional cleaning and disinfecting will take place should a positive case be confirmed.

**Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks** - Screening testing identifies infected people, including those with or without symptoms (or before the development of symptoms) who may be contagious, so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission. MCDPH will be providing us with more information on screening testing in the near future.

Our school mitigation plan will be updated and posted on the website in the next week.