

# ANDOVER CENTRAL

31-35 ELM ST., P.O. BOX G, ANDOVER, NY 14806



# SCHOOL DISTRICT

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September 9, 2021

Dear Parents & Guardians,

I regret to share that this afternoon the DOH notified us that 3 individuals had tested positive for COVID and will therefore be out on quarantine. Contact tracing here at the school indicated that there would be no further action required for 2 of the cases. Unfortunately, one of the cases led to an exposure which has, in turn, led to 3 additional quarantines.

While the initial 3 cases were outside of our control, the subsequent quarantines stemming from a school-based exposure were entirely preventable. The culprit here was an improperly worn mask.

Rising transmission rates across the region, coupled with more stringent requirements from the state mean that we need your cooperation and support more than ever. In order to maintain full-time, in person instruction for all students, they must remain properly masked while inside the building. Beyond serving as the linchpin in our mitigation efforts, full-time masking is a state requirement and it directly impacts the scope of potential quarantines, and indeed, our very ability to function.

With respect to masks, upon further review and following additional consultation with the DOH, we will need to amend our guidelines. Moving forward, masks must be worn at all times by every person (staff and student) while inside the building, regardless of the distance between them. The only stated exceptions to this requirement are when students are eating, singing, or playing a wind instrument, or are outdoors.

Our practice of allowing students to remove their masks in classrooms when they are seated 6 or more feet apart is no longer permissible. Apparently, it may never have been permissible in the first place; however, inconsistencies within the regulations that were released last week led to some misunderstanding for which I accept full responsibility.

Given the incongruity in several parts of the regulation, we and the DOH are seeking further clarification from Albany; however, until we receive definitive guidance, we must adhere to a policy of all masks, all the time. Please speak with your children to reinforce this necessity.

Thanks, and stay well.

Derek Schuelein, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Andover Central School District