

## The Exploris School Covid Rapid Response SCHOOL POLICIES & FAMILY FAQ

We are monitoring the Covid cases in our area and the evolving situation, especially with the Delta variant and schools.. The Leadership Team met on August 17th and again on August 23rd to review the latest updates in Covid regulations and to develop a rapid response so we will be prepared as a school in case of Covid outbreaks in our school community. At its regular meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 25th, the Exploris School Board approved the revised Return-to\_Lean Plan.

Here are the broad strokes of how we will respond, understanding that changes may have to happen quickly as local conditions and/or ordinances change and as we reflect on what's most effective for our students and staff.

***Q: Can you explain what public charter schools can do re: remote learning?***

**A:** Charters **cannot** offer remote learning as an alternative option for students based on family preference. Charters can create 504 plans for homebound instruction that can include remote learning for students who have a medically documented reason why they cannot be present for daily in person instruction. Charters can allow students who are sick or quarantined due to Covid to be coded as 1R (present, remote) as long as the school is providing students with instructional activities and daily check-ins with staff. Charters can move the whole school, a grade level, or another subgroup to remote learning for a short period of time due to student or staff cases or due to an inability to safely staff the school due to staff members being quarantined or absent due to Covid. Charters can also move to remote learning for a short period of time for deep cleaning or sanitation, and can apply to OCS for a curriculum modification to their charter if they want to adopt a more permanent change to blended learning.

***Q: What are the quarantine guidelines?***

**A:** These have changed since last spring. Students or adults in the school do NOT need to quarantine if they are exposed **in a classroom setting** to someone who has tested positive for Coronavirus IF at least two risk mitigating factors are present. Risk mitigating factors are:

- Vaccination
- Universal masking
- Use of high-quality air purifiers
- Social distancing of 3-6 feet
- Outdoor exposure only

Staff or students who are exposed **without at least two of the above**, people who are experiencing symptoms, or people who have tested positive must quarantine until:

- 10 days of quarantine have been completed and no symptoms have been reported during daily at home monitoring;
- 7 days of quarantine have been completed, no symptoms have been reported during daily at home monitoring, and the individual has received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.

***Q: What if students or staff are exposed outside of the classroom setting?***

**A: Exploris will require families to follow the CDC guidelines, which are:**

- **Exposure:** a person who is not fully vaccinated and has been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 is considered to have had an exposure. (Fully vaccinated persons and persons who have tested positive in the last 3 months and do not have any symptoms after a close contact do not need to quarantine.)
- Exposed persons can return to school:
  - after completing 14 days of quarantine. The 14 days of quarantine begin after the last known close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual.
  - Alternatively the person may:
    - complete a 10-day quarantine if the person is not presenting symptoms of COVID-19 after daily at-home monitoring
    - or they may complete 7 days of quarantine if they report no symptoms during daily at-home monitoring, AND the individual has received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.

***Q: If my student is sick, how/when do they come back to school?***

**A:** Because Covid symptoms in children can be pretty much anything that makes them feel unwell, including headache, upset stomach, diarrhea, congestion, coughing, runny nose, sore throat, or fever, **EXPLORIS IS REQUIRING A NEGATIVE COVID TEST.** Written or emailed documentation of the test will be required for a return to in-person learning. Documentation can be sent to the student's crew teacher or to Ethan at the elementary school or Deb at the middle school. ([EBurton@Exploris.org](mailto:EBurton@Exploris.org) and [Deborah@Exploris.org](mailto:Deborah@Exploris.org).) We are working on providing onsite testing and will send more information on that shortly. Meanwhile, Covid tests are free and widely available at sites all over our state. You can find a testing site near you at [this link](#) for Wake County testing sites.

We recognize the obligation this puts on our families and we are happy to support you in getting your student tested. We ask families to understand that since Covid can present with so many different symptoms, testing is one of the tools we must have in place in order to protect our staff and students and in order to keep kids in the classroom. A single positive student could cause an entire grade or even the whole school to need to return to remote learning.

***Q: What if my student has a previously diagnosed condition, like seasonal allergies?***

**A:** Your home screening should be looking for NEW or newly emerging symptoms. If your student has a regular cough or runny nose associated with asthma or allergies or a previously diagnosed condition, please let your crew teacher know, and keep your student home if those symptoms worsen, change, or if new symptoms appear.

***Q: What if someone else in our household is sick, like a parent or a sibling, but has not yet had a Covid test?***

**A:** If anyone in your household is feeling unwell, we strongly urge that students be kept home while awaiting test results for any member of the household. We understand this may seem cautious and may be inconvenient or difficult; we still ask families to err on the side of caution rather than risk exposing a whole classroom.

***Q: Will Exploris continue to report Covid cases?***

**A:** Yes, when we learn of a conformed Covid case we will:

- Send generic updates to our whole community
- Send personal contact letters to individuals who have had a direct exposure. (Please see above for the definition of “exposure.”)
- Update the dashboard on our website

***Q: What can we do right now to be prepared if our students need to be quarantined for Covid?***

- Have a backup childcare plan
- Let your crew teacher know if your student needs a device loaned from the school and/or if you need support for internet access
- Follow your student’s class newsletter or blog to get directions about what daily schedules and activities will look like
- Stay in contact with your student’s crew teacher about expectations for remote learning

***Q: What can we do right now to help keep our whole community safe?***

- Exploris very strongly encourages vaccination for all eligible people. In the future, we may need to move to requiring Covid screening tests onsite at our campuses on a regular basis for unvaccinated individuals, staff, students, or volunteers.
- Exploris encourages frequent Covid testing for **any symptoms of illness**, since especially in children, symptoms may be mild and can include headaches, stomach aches/upset stomach, congestion, sore throat, coughing, and/or fever.
- Make sure your student’s mask is well-fitted and that they have backups. Stress, teach, and practice **correct mask wearing**. (Masks worn with noses exposed, for example, are not effective and eliminate the protection of wearing the mask at all.) Review some [kid-friendly videos on proper mask wearing](#) or talk through this [infographic for kids and wearing masks](#)
- Even outside of the school day, continue to wear masks and limit social interactions in larger groups, especially indoors.

- Keep your student home if they feel unwell; err on the side of caution rather than risk exposing a full class.

***Q: What will Exploris consider to be an “outbreak”? When would you close school?***

**A:**

- If there is a cluster in a single grade of five or more cases, we will put our grade-level quarantine procedures in place
- If there are more than 15% total absences on one campus due to Covid, we will move *that campus only* to remote learning for a short period of time to allow for quarantines to take place.
- We may also move a campus to remote learning for an extended weekend, for example, to allow for deeper cleaning and sanitation

***Q: Will teachers be required to get vaccinated?***

**A:** At this time we have surveyed our staff and while we are still collecting data, the information we have so far is that about 95% of our staff are fully vaccinated. We do strongly encourage all staff to be vaccinated in order to protect themselves and their students from not only the virus but from potentially lengthy absences and are currently considering a policy of requiring either vaccination or weekly testing for unvaccinated staff.

***Q: What if my student is quarantined, but not the whole class? What kind of academic support can we expect?***

**A:** Staff will send work home the way they might in a more traditional case when a student is at home sick and will set up check-ins with that student through emails, Google hangouts, phone calls, Zoom calls, etc. to give feedback and answer any questions. Staff will not be able to do concurrent teaching, although in some cases creative arrangements can be made for the student to have a Zoom call, for example, to participate in a small group discussion, activity or project.

***Q: If I have more questions or something specific to our family situation, what should I do?***

**A:** Please contact [Leadership@Exploris.org](mailto:Leadership@Exploris.org) and you should receive a reply within 24 hours.