

January 14, 2022

Dear Erskine Academy Students, Families, and Staff:

From the pandemic's start, our primary goal has been a safe return to in-person learning for students and staff. Presently, our ability to be together in the classroom and enjoy reimagined favored traditions and events is not aspirational but critical.

Throughout this public health crisis, our decision-making and problem-solving have been informed and guided by Maine's Center for Disease and Prevention (MCDC), Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Education (MDOE). These agencies announced further revisions to the MCDC's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for responding to COVID-19 in schools. I write today to inform you of these and earlier changes and their effects on our program.

Effective immediately and for the foreseeable future, yet subject to change:

- Students or staff testing positive for COVID will quarantine for 5 days regardless of vaccination status. If the positive individual has no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days, they may return to school but must continue to wear a mask around others for an additional 5 days (please note that Erskine has a mandatory masking policy in place). If after 5 days, the individual has a fever or other symptoms that are not resolving, they need to remain in quarantine.
- Because Erskine **enforces a universal masking policy**, vaccinated and unvaccinated close contacts **do not need** to quarantine from school or school activities. Also, school-based contact tracing need not be conducted, meaning school staff will no longer be identifying individuals within 3-to-6 feet of a person who tests positive.
- Mandated masking now applies to **all** school operations and sponsored activities, including athletic practices and contests, regardless of where they occur and when riding school transportation.
- Masks are **not** required to be worn when outdoors, even where there may be direct contact with others, or when eating or drinking.

- The previous exemption from quarantining and mask-wearing for pooled testing participants is no longer in effect; therefore, winter sports athletes' requirement to participate in pooled testing has been lifted. However, pooled testing will continue on a weekly and voluntary basis for those who wish to participate.
- For attendance reporting purposes, “positive” results from at-home tests are now accepted.

School Nurse Tara Oxley will continue to monitor conditions, assess and report student cases, and provide guidance to families with Covid-positive members. We encourage you to communicate with Nurse Oxley and Ms. Julie Wing in the attendance office about students' Covid symptoms and testing results. We will continue to observe the 5-day isolation period required of student or staff positive cases.

We wish you good health and safety in the days and weeks ahead, and we thank you for your continued support of our efforts to remain open to in-person learning one good school day at a time.

All the best,

Michael J. McQuarrie
Headmaster