

**Sweet Home Central School District
Safety Guidelines
2021-2022 School Year**



Sweet Home Schools... .. Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future

Dear Sweet Home Families,

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year at Sweet Home. We are excited for a new beginning and we are ready to open our doors to the entire student body, K-12 at Sweet Home this year. Of course, we are still in the midst of the pandemic. We understand the disruption it has been to our families. However, it is critical that our students return to in-person learning so we meet their educational needs as well as address their social and emotional well being.

The guidelines in this document outline our safety procedures for the 2021-2022 school year. As with everything during the pandemic, **they are subject to change at a moment's notice**. With that said, we are confident that these guidelines provide a safe environment for our entire student body as they return to full, in-person instruction, five days a week.

These guidelines have been developed in conjunction with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and most recently, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH). We are particularly grateful for their support as they have led the way in providing guidance when the New York State Department of Health refused. Erie County worked and listened to local superintendents and school leaders to develop guidelines that return our students to school with safety as the number one priority.

While I may have started on August 2, I have heard from so many parents and community members regarding their thoughts on opening school this year. You have helped tremendously in shaping these guidelines as we were able to convey your thoughts to Erie County. I appreciate your input and welcome more as the school year progresses. I also want to thank the School Opening Task Force for their work in the spring in relaying the fact that our students need to be back in the classroom safely.

As we move through the school year, adjustments to these guidelines will likely be made. We will continue to work with you and all health agencies to keep our students safe in the classroom.

Thank you for your time and for embracing "The Sweet Home Way." We could not be more excited to start the year and serve all of the students of our great district. Best wishes on a most successful school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael V. Ginestre". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Michael V. Ginestre -- Superintendent of Schools

The following guidelines have been developed in conjunction with the CDC, AAP, and the ECDOH. They are designed for the return of all students, K-12, safely to the classroom for in-person instruction, five days a week. Our goal is to keep every single Sweet Home student in school for each and every day of this school year. These safety measures will help us in accomplishing that goal.

Masking

Indoors

The Sweet Home Central School District now requires indoor masking for all individuals ages 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, bus drivers, bus aides, vendors, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. Appropriate masks must be worn at all times in all classroom and non-classroom settings, including but not limited to hallways, school offices, restrooms, gyms, locker rooms, auditoriums, etc.

During Meals

Students may remove their mask during meals as long as they sit 3 feet apart, to the extent possible. At the elementary school, students will eat in classrooms when possible. Students at the Middle School and High School will eat in their respective cafeterias and remain at 3 feet of distance when possible.

Outdoors

The Sweet Home Central School District will also follow the ECDOH's guidance and strongly recommend masks outdoors. We will ask all individuals who are on any Sweet Home property to maximize physical distance to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus on school grounds, especially when masks are not being worn outside.

Transportation

Sweet Home will also require bus drivers, bus aides, staff, and students to wear a mask at all times while on school buses, regardless of vaccination status.

Mask Breaks

According to the ECDOH, mask breaks may be taken by students once every hour for approximately 5 minutes. Students should be seated and stationary at their desks during mask breaks. If students are seated closer than 6 feet, breaks will be staggered so that students closer than 6 feet are not taking breaks at the same time.

Exceptions

Persons who cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability or medical condition should work with Sweet Home administration for reasonable accommodations. Sweet Home will require written documentation of a medical or physical condition from a physician or licensed medical provider before providing an exception.

Distancing

The Sweet Home Central School District has implemented physical distancing to the extent possible within our facilities. With that said, Sweet Home will not exclude students from in-person learning to meet a minimum distance requirements. According to the ECDOH, several studies from the 2020-2021 school year show low COVID-19 transmission levels among students in schools that had less than 6 feet of physical distance when the school implemented and layered other prevention strategies, such as the use of masks.

Students

Sweet Home will follow the recommendations of the ECDOH and implement, when possible, at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms combined with mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk, regardless of vaccination status.

Close Contact and Quarantine

When determining close contact status following an exposure, unvaccinated students within 3 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious will be quarantined regardless if masks were worn. As per CDC guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine.

Teachers/Staff

Sweet Home will follow the strong recommendation of the ECDOH and whenever possible maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between teachers/staff and students combined with mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk, regardless of vaccination status. When determining close contact status following an exposure, unvaccinated teachers/staff within 6 feet from the positive COVID-19 case for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period during a time the case was infectious will be quarantined regardless if masks were worn. As per CDC guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts are not subject to quarantine.

Band, Chorus, and Orchestra

Sweet Home will follow the ECDOH guidelines and require individuals participating in activities that involve projecting the voice (singing) or playing a wind instrument must be 6 feet apart during practice and lessons and must wear a mask when not singing or playing.

For performances, Sweet Home requires, to the extent practicable, that individuals participating in activities that involve projecting the voice (singing) or playing a wind instrument must be 6 feet apart during all performances and must wear a mask when not singing or playing. Sweet Home requires, without exception, at least 6 feet of distance between the performers and the audience during all performances.

Health Monitoring

Sweet Home, as required by the ECDOH, requires daily health screenings, including temperature and COVID-19 symptom checks upon entry into all of our facilities for students, faculty, staff, visitors, contractors and vendors. If an individual presents with a temperature greater than 100.0°F, or reports one or more COVID-19 symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, the individual will be denied entry into the facility or sent directly to a dedicated isolation area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home. Sweet Home will incorporate similar screening procedures as the 2020-2021 school year. All individuals must complete the screening on a daily basis to enter our buildings.

Returning to School Following an Illness

If your child presents any COVID-19-like symptoms at home, DO NOT send them to school. Please call your child's school nurse as soon as possible for guidance.

COVID-19-Like Illness

ECDOH requires that in order for students or staff to return to school following a COVID-19-like illness, regardless of vaccination status, one of the three following criteria must be met:

1. A negative COVID-19 test is provided. ECDOH strongly recommends a PCR COVID-19 test. OR
2. A note from the student/staff's medical care provider with an alternative diagnosis provided. OR
3. There have been at least 10 days since the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

A negative at-home COVID-19 test result will NOT be accepted to return a student to school or a staff member to work.

COVID-19 Positive Case

ECDOH requires that students or staff must meet all the following criteria in order to return to school following testing positive for COVID-19:

1. At least 10 days after COVID-19 symptom onset or 10 days from their first positive test if asymptomatic AND
2. Fever-free for at least 24 consecutive hours without the use of fever-reducing medications AND
3. COVID-19 symptoms are improving.

Athletics

Sweet Home, as per the ECDOH, now requires masking for all youth sport players during all youth sport activities whenever the players are not actively participating in game play or practice. Sweet Home further requires masking of all youth sport coaches and staff during all youth sport activities while not directly engaged in physical activity.

Sweet Home, as per the ECDOH, strongly recommends masking for all youth sport players during game play and practice unless they are unable to physically tolerate masking. In addition, ECDOH strongly recommends that athletes and coaches who are not engaging in physical activity (i.e. sitting on the bench or sidelines) maintain a distance of at least 3ft.

If there is one COVID-19 case on a team that is present while infectious, all unvaccinated players and coaches/staff are required to pause for 10 days from the last exposure. Vaccinated players and coaches/staff may continue game play and team activities during a team pause. Pause means no practice, games, or team activities for the affected team, but players and coaches/staff not identified as unvaccinated close contacts are able to go to work and school.

All visitors that enter a Sweet Home facility must be masked. This is for all events, including athletics, music, theatre, and all over events at our buildings.

COVID-19 Proximal and Surveillance Testing

The Sweet Home Central School District will participate in the ECDOH's proximal and surveillance COVID-19 testing program. This program is designed to stop transmission and outbreaks of COVID-19 cases in our schools.

Proximal testing will occur if there is a positive case that has been identified in a classroom. With parental consent, medical personnel provided by the ECDOH will test everyone in that classroom within three to five days of the positive case.

Surveillance testing, with consent, will occur on 10 percent of the unvaccinated student body and staff on a weekly basis.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

In general, cleaning once a day sufficiently removes potential viruses that may be on surfaces. Sweet Home Central School District will follow this guideline and thoroughly clean and disinfect buildings on a daily basis. If a facility has had a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, Sweet Home will immediately clean and disinfect that space.

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