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September 14, 2021

Dear USD 350 Parents,

The USD 350 Board of Education met in a special meeting on September 12th to close school for one week. This was due to rapid spread of Covid-19 in our staff and student population and a lack of availability of substitutes. We started off this year doing things pretty much like we finished the year last spring. However, the situation this fall is much different and we must make adjustments.

Our goal is to keep kids in school every day and to keep everyone safe and healthy. This has been our priority all along and will continue to be. In response to the recent outbreak and school closure, the board adjusted Covid protocols at their regular meeting on September 13th. We want to ensure that families are aware of these changes.

First is the requirement to wear masks or face coverings. This is one proactive thing we can do now to help limit further spread. Masks will be required of all individuals in the school buildings for a period of two weeks starting September 20th when we return to school. After this two-week period, we will re-evaluate. If the number of positive cases and close contacts in the staff/student population is under 6%, masks will be optional. If the 6% threshold is exceeded, masks will become required again.

There is an exception if families choose to opt out their students from wearing masks. While we feel it is important to have everyone in a mask while the virus is actively spreading, the board also felt it was important to honor the personal choice of families in our district. If your family is choosing to opt out, you need to complete the paper form which can be found on our website. Keep in mind that if both a positive case and a close contact are wearing masks, the close contact will not need to quarantine. Masks will be required on buses and in school vehicles per federal law and there is no option to opt out.

When someone is identified as a close contact of a positive case, he/she must quarantine for 10 days. We offer the option to stay in school if a person tests negative for Covid each day during the quarantine period. Masks must be worn if utilizing this "test to stay" option. Testing is not required for anyone. It is only provided as an alternative option to staying out of school for 10 days.

Many of the positive cases we've had were experiencing mild symptoms like a runny nose and sore throat. These symptoms that are similar to symptoms of fall allergies happened before any fever or chills. It is important that students do not come to school if they have any symptoms. It is also important to get a test to know whether any symptoms are related to Covid or not.

We are doing our best here to keep school operational. We appreciate the patience, cooperation, and understanding of our families as we continue to work through this Covid dilemma. Specific information about the Covid protocols is posted on our website. Feel free to contact the school offices with questions.

Respectfully,

Josh Meyer, Superintendent / Elementary Principal

Board of Education

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