



Knob Noster R-VIII School District

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Dr. Jerrod Wheeler, Superintendent of Schools

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Our Mission Is Student Success

Date: 8-20-2020
To: KNPS Staff and Parents
From: Jerrod Wheeler
Re: Updated Johnson County Public Health Order

Dear KNPS Parents and Staff:

Thank you for your ongoing partnership as we move through our return to school plan. I am writing to relay information regarding the recently-updated Johnson County Public Health Order. This order is in place to further protect our county against the spread of COVID-19, and face coverings are an important part of the effort.

Knob Noster Public Schools remains committed to following the guidance from our county health department and other agencies of authority. The district also remains committed that our position is to follow the order as written, and to not deviate from it in any way. KNPS does not represent a medical authority, and therefore will not deviate from the public health order with more restrictive or less restrictive guidance. That is not our place.

Knob Noster Public Schools recognizes the Covid-19 situation and associated implications (such as mandated face coverings) as a good-faith health measure that has become a highly polarized, politicized, and potentially contentious situation. The district continues to make every effort to maximize parental choice as we move through this situation. The protocols that have been established in our Covid-19 Return to School and Response Plan, including the new protocols listed below, are designed to allow: (1) The highest level of independent decision making among our individual parents, (2) The highest level of safety at school while operating within the directives of our public health agencies.

We ask parents to speak clearly and directly with your children to establish expectations for their safeguards while at school. These conversations may include handwashing, physical distancing, face coverings, or any other safeguard that a parent considers appropriate. At the elementary level, where students require the most guidance for decision making, we also encourage parents to communicate their expectations or preferences clearly and directly with their child's teacher. This communication will empower our teachers to align to the expectations of individual parents, to the greatest extent possible. Again, we thank you for your partnership and communication!

Updated Information

On August 17, 2020, the Johnson County Public Health Order was extended, with a few notable changes that impact our return to school plan and protocols:

1. Face Covering Exemption Item 3(l) states:

“Students while attending school....will fall under the school facility's current COVID-19 policy.”

As stated above, our COVID-19 plan specifically states that the district will align to the Public Health Order. The district will not assume the responsibility of establishing public health guidelines. Accordingly, this new

item directing responsibility to the school to mandate health guidance is directed back to the county health department, as clearly established in our COVID-19 Return to School and Response Plan, which was published in July.

2. Face Covering Exemption Item 3(k) states:

“When in a business/commercial/office setting and not within six feet of any other person; provided however, when moving from place to place within a business location, where the person cannot maintain at all times a distance of six feet from all other persons a face covering shall be worn.”

Implications and Changes to Protocol

In alignment to the most recent guidance from the Johnson County Health Department:

Face Coverings

The district will require face coverings in alignment to the indoor, outdoor, and exceptions guidance as written in the public health order. Employees of the district are responsible for abiding by all protocols of our COVID-19 Return to School and Response Plan, including the following new protocols. Employees are not allowed or directed to require students to remove or to wear face coverings outside of these protocols. Students, parents and teachers should immediately report any concerns to school administration. As shared above, imposing health orders is not the responsibility of our district or any employee of the district, as we are not medical professionals or health authorities.

1. All students and staff will be required to wear a mask in the following instances (unless exempted per the public health order. i.e. medical exemptions etc.).

A. While riding the bus, unless a minimum of six (6) feet physical distance can be maintained. The district strongly encourages face coverings to be worn at all times while on buses, due to the nature of the close, closed space. Windows on buses will be opened whenever possible to allow for maximum air exchange.

B. While entering and exiting a school building or while moving within the building. This included passing times, lunch periods while not eating, before and after school periods, etc. The district assesses these times as presenting a higher risk for exposure and a higher level of difficulty in identifying potential close contacts.

C. While in classrooms or other areas where physical distance is achieved and where students are stationary and not moving about, students MAY remove their face covering at their discretion. (significant change from prior protocol) While moving within a classroom, students will be required to wear their face covering.

D. While outdoors on our campuses, face coverings may be removed when physical distancing is achieved.

Physical Distancing:

The district will continue to follow the most recent guidelines from the Johnson County Health Department which includes a target physical distance of 6 feet and a minimum physical distance of 3 feet. This will be encouraged at all times during our school day and during school events.

Cohort Protocol Updates

Various protocols are in place to keep student cohorts limited. With the updated guidance which allows students to remove face coverings (while stationary inside our school and when physical distance is achieved),

our approach on cohorts will change slightly. Within individual classrooms or inside areas, seating arrangements will align to student preference regarding mask coverings. This will allow students who prefer to wear masks indoors at all times to be further away from those who prefer not to wear masks at all times. This will be done in an effort to align to individual preferences and help enhance the comfort level of all students, based on their individual preference.

Close Contact

The district will continue to define a Close Contact as any individual who is in the presence of a confirmed positive case for 15 minutes or longer at a distance of three (3) feet or less.

Moving Forward – Welcome Back to School!

Other than the updates/changes specified above, the district will continue to follow the published COVID-19 Return to School and Response Plan. We continue to appreciate the collaboration, communication, and teamwork between our parents, students, and district team. As we return to school next week, please reach out to any member of our team if we may further assist. We look forward to reconnecting the Knob Noster Public Schools family early next Monday morning. Have a great weekend and Go Panthers!

Very Respectfully,

Jerrod Wheeler