



August 10, 2021

Welcome to the 2021-22 school year!

This document contains the USD 460 Back to School Plan to address COVID-19. This plan is to help guide us through the early stages of the school year. We learned much from our experiences last year and have adjusted our approach according to those lessons. The 2020-21 plan is shorter and simpler than the one we put together last year, but it details our approach to many aspects of COVID-19 mitigation, student and staff health and safety, and providing the most effective learning environment possible.

It is important to understand that public health guidance and information has changed often over the days and weeks leading up to this school year. In this plan, our goal is to make sure families are informed and up to date on guidance from public health officials, with an emphasis on the Harvey County Health Department recommended protocols. However, all of us need to be prepared to adjust our plans and protocols based on the prevalence of COVID-19 in our community. **It is especially important to prepare for adjustments should we see transmission of COVID-19 in our school system or should we see concerns with local hospital capacity.**

As we navigated the 2020-21 school year, much of our concern focused on our populations most at-risk for severe illness related to COVID-19. That meant many of our adults who might have underlying health conditions or other high-risk factors that make them more susceptible to severe impact from COVID-19. We are in a different place this year with the availability of vaccines, which the Harvey County Health Department describes as “the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.” This plan recognizes that most high-risk populations do have the ability to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and that school-aged children, overall, are at lower risk of severe effects of COVID-19.

While this year will present new challenges for us all, our goal is to provide a safe and high-quality learning environment for our students and staff. We are incredibly excited to have kids back in our buildings after the summer break, and we look forward to the fun activities that are a part of going back to school. Thank you for entrusting the USD 460 staff with your children. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have questions or concerns about anything we do in Hesston Public Schools.

Respectfully,

Ben Proctor
Superintendent
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A TARGETED APPROACH

- USD 460 will take a targeted approach to mitigation strategies. This includes identifying specific situations, settings, and individuals where risk might be especially high and special accommodations and mitigation strategies are needed. We encourage families to discuss possible accommodations with our school administrators and school nurses. School staff will identify times and locations where special accommodations might be necessary, and we will communicate accordingly.
- When risk of exposure is high, we will identify times and locations where specific mitigation strategies are needed. For example, if an elementary classroom has multiple positive cases and there is potential for transmission in our school, we will implement specific strategies that will allow us to safely keep our kids in school.

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

- Keeping our kids in school and engaged in activities is essential. As we progress through the school year, adjustments to our plan may be necessary. This is especially true if we see evidence of significant COVID-19 transmission in our schools. We will closely monitor our COVID-related absences and will make decisions about tightening protocols to ensure we do not compromise our ability to maintain in-person learning each day.

STAY HOME WHEN SICK

- Any student with a temperature of 100 or greater should stay home from school and be fever-free for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication.
- Students with COVID symptoms may return to school when they have been symptom-free and fever-free for 72 hours without fever reducing medication.
- Students who exhibit 2 or more symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home from school, and parents are encouraged to test for COVID-19 when 2 or more symptoms are present.

COVID-RELATED ABSENCES

- Students will be excused from school for the following COVID-related reasons:
- Positive COVID-19 test or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test.
- Quarantine due to being a close contact or household contact.
- Fever of 100+ and one other symptom of COVID-19.
- Staying home out of caution due to family member testing for COVID-19.

MASKS

- Referencing the CDC, the Harvey County Health Department (HCHD) states, "Masks are highly recommended to be worn indoors by all individuals in areas of substantial or high transmission of COVID-19."
- As we begin this school year, USD 460 highly recommends masks are worn in school buildings due to increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in our county and region, along with a degree of uncertainty regarding the delta variant and impact on non-vaccinated populations.
- USD 460 does not mandate masks in our schools, but we encourage families to consider current conditions and guidance from public health agencies when making decisions about masks.
- We will create a supportive environment for all students and staff, regardless of their decision related to masks.
- We believe masking guidance should be adjusted as conditions in the region change, and with current cases and hospitalizations rising, we believe students and staff should consider wearing masks as part of our layered mitigation approach.
- Per federal requirements, masks will be required on school buses and in all school vehicles.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- The CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of distance between students in classrooms.
- USD 460 will consistently maintain at least 3 feet of distance between students in all classrooms.
- Students may be within 3 feet of one another during lunch at HES, and cohorts will be employed in that setting and any other where 3 feet of space cannot be maintained.
- Cohorts involve students sitting by the same individuals each day while at lunch tables or in other common spaces, where 3 feet of distance cannot be maintained.

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CONTACT TRACING, ISOLATION, AND QUARANTINE

- According to the HCHD, isolation is described as follows: “An individual who receives a positive COVID-19 result will remain in a maximum of 10-day isolation period, unless symptoms of the virus are still present.”
- According to the HCHD, quarantine is described as follows: “Any close contacts will be contacted for a quarantine period outlined by KDHE and the Harvey County Medical Director. This quarantine period may be up to 14 days. Close contacts in K-12 settings are individuals deemed 6 feet or closer for 10 minutes or more who have not been fully vaccinated. Those fully vaccinated are exempt from quarantine.”
- Additionally, any close contact who has had a positive COVID-19 test result within the past 6 months will be exempt from quarantine requirements, as long as symptoms are not present.
- When a positive test result is known, it is the responsibility of USD 460 to ensure individuals who have tested positive are not allowed in school for the duration of the isolation period, in accordance with the requirements of the HCHD.
- It is the responsibility of the HCHD to identify and notify any close contacts of the obligation to quarantine, in accordance with the requirements of the HCHD, and our school nurses will assist the HCHD in these efforts.

MODIFIED QUARANTINE (UPDATED 8.18.21)

- The Harvey County Health Department has created an exception to our regular quarantine process that will allow most close contacts to remain in school through a modified quarantine.
- When a student or staff member is identified as a close contact, our nurses will make that contact with the staff member or the student’s parent/guardian.
- In order to remain in school and not have to quarantine outside of school, the close contact may need to wear a mask for a short period of time.
- Additionally, there could be physical distancing requirements and possible COVID testing, and all of this will be shared and discussed with the parents/guardians prior to officially putting any student on a modified quarantine.
- This process will allow us to keep more staff and students in school and engaged in activities, which was a major concern last school year, as many staff and students missed school unnecessarily.

DIAGNOSTIC TESTING AND SCREENING

- For those individuals who may be exposed to COVID-19 or who have developed symptoms, we will provide information on local testing sites and services.
- We are looking at some testing options that we could administer in the school district, but we have not formalized that process as of mid-August.

VACCINATIONS

- According to the HCHD, “Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extra-curricular activities and sports.”
- For anyone who is eligible, wishing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, the Hesston Pharmacy accepts walk-in visits anytime during business hours.

HANDWASHING AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- USD 460 will provide frequent opportunities to wash and/or sanitize hands with mounted hand sanitizing stations across our facilities and in our school vehicles.
- We will teach and practice covering coughing and sneezing.
- We will post signage throughout buildings with reminders of good hygiene practices.

CLEANING FACILITIES AND VENTILATION

- USD 460 will continue to maintain the highest standard for cleaning and disinfecting facilities.
- We will maintain an ample supply of cleaning supplies in all buildings and vehicles.
- We will consider utilizing federal COVID-relief funds to further upgrade our HVAC infrastructure.

SCHOOL VEHICLES

- Masks will be required on school buses and in all school vehicles, per federal requirements.
- Students will not always be separated by 3 feet on buses and other school vehicles, but we will maintain 3 feet of distance whenever possible.

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- Students will have assigned seats on bus routes and will sit with family members when possible.
- School vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected between routes.
- We will utilize windows to maximize ventilation and air movement in vehicles.

COORDINATION WITH HEALTH OFFICIALS

- We will work and communicate with the HCHD as the USD 460 Board of Education and school district administrators make decisions to promote a safe and healthy learning environment for all students and staff.
- The details of this plan have been reviewed by staff at the HCHD.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- USD 460 will ensure all students receive educational services in accordance with IDEA & ADA.

ADDRESSING STUDENT ACADEMIC NEEDS

- USD 460 will continue focusing on student academic needs and will provide a high-quality learning environment for all.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, our primary goal has been to ensure our students are able to attend school each day in-person, and that will continue to be our priority for 2021-22.
- We will utilize a variety of academic assessments to support student progress and performance and will utilize classroom-based assessments and teacher feedback to ensure adequate student supports are in place.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH

- USD 460 is highly committed to supporting student and staff social, emotional, & mental health and all decisions will account for this aspect of student and staff well-being.
- As we make decisions about COVID-19 mitigation strategies, it is essential that we recognize the potential mental health concerns related to some of the primary strategies, including masks and quarantines.
- We will conduct several student and staff surveys that assess overall health and well-being.
- We will continue to implement our Character Strong curriculum focused on social and emotional learning and development.
- We will continue to implement our advisory periods, RS and CREW, to support non-academic learning and focus on building a positive school culture and environment to support the overall well-being of everyone in our school system.

USD 460 REMOTE LEARNING INFORMATION

- Earlier this year, the Kansas Legislature passed a new law that changes remote learning from what we knew during the 2020-21 school year.
- As a general rule, remote learning is not available to students for the 2021-22 school year. If a student is absent for a COVID-related reason, that student will receive classwork and will stay in contact with teachers, just as he or she would when missing for any excused absence.

SCHOOL NURSES

- Our school nurses are Tammi Krehbiel and DeeDee Landes.
- Nurse Tammi is our lead contact for all questions and concerns at HES and Nurse DeeDee focuses most of her time at HMS and HHS, although they work together whenever necessary.
- Some of their responsibilities include: Communicating with the HCHD; Maintaining record of COVID-related absences; and Working directly with families, especially when there is a positive case or close contact.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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