

August 28, 2020

Happy Friday EGF ISD 595 Families and Staff Members!

I hope all of you are doing well! It is hard to believe that the start of the 2020-21 school year is less than two weeks away! The primary reasons for this newsletter are to provide updates on latest back to school news and ask everyone to do their part in helping to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus.

Please take a little time to review the following information and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

- **Latest Polk County Data** - We just received the latest county 14-day case per 10,000 data from Polk County for the weeks of August 2-15 and it dipped to 8.55. Please keep in mind that the data is almost two weeks old and there has been an uptick of cases in the area. District officials communicate with Polk County Public Health staff members on an almost daily basis to discuss the current data. The Board of Education approved the official Re-Entry Plan containing in-person instruction for grades K-5 and hybrid model for grades 6-12. The District Incident Command Team meets weekly with Sarah Reese from Polk County Public Health to discuss the case numbers and the appropriate learning models for our students. Even though the latest county data showed a drop in the number of cases per 10,000, the District does not feel it would be appropriate to go to full in-person instruction for all grade levels due to the increase in cases in the area. We are anticipating an increase in the next 14-day report, but you never know for sure until the data is released.
- **Staff Training** - A majority of the EGF ISD 595 staff members were back in the buildings this week for two days of training and it was really great to see everyone. Staff from all four buildings had an opportunity to listen to PCPH Director Sarah Reese talk about the COVID related scenarios and also ask questions. Sarah did an excellent job of sharing important information and I would like to thank her for all of the guidance she has been providing to school districts in Polk County.
- **Smart Start Date Change for Grades K-5** - The EGF ISD 595 Board of Education recently adjusted the 2020-21 school calendar and moved the Smart Start dates for grades K-5 from September 8th to September 3rd. The extended time period between September 3rd and the first day of school will give staff members and families more time to adjust schedules if changes are needed and should also help with busing concerns. Please note that only grades

6 & 9 will be in session on Tuesday, September 8th. All other PreK-12 grade levels will start school on Wednesday, September 9th. The Preschool Smart Start days are scheduled for September 2 & 3. Please go to the [2020-21 School District Calendar](#) to view the recently adjusted school calendar.

- **Face Covering Policy 808** - The Board of Education also adopted [Face Covering Policy 808](#) in order to provide clarity for staff members and families. Please take a little time to review the policy and contact a district administrator if you have any questions.
- **Symptom Screening for Families and Staff Members** - One area of the EGF ISD 595 Re-Entry to School Plan that is still a work in progress is the symptom screening process for students and staff members. We have been working with two online screening vendors and hope to have everything in place very soon. It will be critical for everyone to take the screening process seriously and participate daily. Temperature screening at buildings and on buses has been heavily discussed at many meetings, but may not be the best option at this time. Taking temperatures at home as part of the symptom screening process will be more effective than taking them as people enter buildings and/or buses, but everyone will need to do their part. We were recently informed by Polk County Public Health that they have purchased 1000 thermometers that will be available for families who are in need in order to help with the screening process. Families and staff members will be notified about the screening process as soon as the final details are worked out, as well as how to access a thermometer if one is needed. THANK YOU in advance for your cooperation!

I would like to end this letter by stating that it is going to take a HUGE TEAM EFFORT by EVERYONE involved in order for students, staff members and families to have a successful school year and be safe. All of us want to see students back in school buildings for as much face to face instruction as possible, but if we are not diligent in following the safety guidance, it will be very difficult. There has been an uptick in the number cases in the East Grand Forks and Grand Forks areas and we need to do whatever we can to help reduce the spread. Please continue to wear a face covering when necessary, wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, follow the social distancing requirements, and make wise decisions. The start of the school year is right around the corner and we want it to be great!

Have a wonderful weekend and be safe!

Mike Kolness

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