



SOUTHWEST LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Harrison Junior School Parents / Guardians,

September 15, 2021

This letter is to update you on our COVID protocol at Harrison Junior School. We transitioned to universal masking at HJS on September 3, 2021, when positive cases, and the number of quarantined students, were jumping rapidly under the previous mitigation protocol of masks being strongly recommended. When making this transition, we spoke to the importance of both tracking and revisiting the number of students that were out of school due to COVID by September 15, 2021. As one might expect, it didn't take long for our quarantine numbers to drop significantly, after universal masking was put into place. On September 3, we had over 180 students quarantined at HJS and 17 positive cases, resulting in over 1,576 cumulative days of school missed by that group. As of today, September 15, 2021, we have 9 positive students and just 1 close contact (stemming from lunch time). The current positive case count is of concern, when comparing our number now to last year, when there were just 3 weeks out of 40 where we had 10 or more students positive. At HJS, we have trended around this number for several weeks now.

Bottom line, with universal masking at HJS, our goal of keeping kids in school, learning face to face, was, and is, being accomplished. Our teachers are able to do their best work when focusing on the students in front of them, versus trying to manage half of their class learning from home on computer screens and the other half sitting in front of them.

After much deliberation and discussion with our school board, district and building level administrative teams, and our nursing team, we have decided to **maintain our current position with regards to universal masking at HJS through the end of first quarter, or October 14, 2021.** We tried the *strongly recommended* option at HJS, and it simply did not work – with regards to keeping kids in school, and teachers working with students face to face. We truly hope that, as we near the end of first quarter, case counts in the community and local virus spread subsides like it did earlier this summer, and that we are able to remove the masks. Time will tell if this is the case. None of us are able to predict the future. Harrison High School is in a very similar position. We will make the call for that building next week. Our elementary schools (Crosby Elementary, Harrison Elementary and Miami Whitewater Elementary) will continue as they are now, with masking being *strongly recommended* until positive cases or large numbers of quarantines require us to transition to a temporary universal masking position. All three schools are holding fast, as of now. We do appreciate the large numbers of elementary students wearing masks each day, which is helping to keep quarantine numbers down.

Kind regards,

John C. Hamstra
Superintendent
Southwest Local Schools

Mission: “Academic and Social growth for all students, EVERY DAY!”

Motto: “Excellence through Relationships!”

Core Values: Trust, Respect, Ownership, and Leadership