February 14, 2022

Kahok Families,

Positive COVID-19 cases have declined among our students and staff to numbers we have not seen since early October. Madison County youth cases have steadily declined and the district continues to partner with health departments to host vaccine clinics for ages five and up. The current health of our students and staff is the best we have seen since early fall. Throughout the pandemic, we have closely monitored the health of our students and staff, the district will continue to make decisions using this data moving forward.

Recently, the Governor announced the statewide indoor mask mandate will be lifted for indoor venues on February 28th. The district pushed for local control in the summer of 2021 and in order to take another step towards normalcy, **the Board of Education approved an updated Return to Learn Plan tonight adopting the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guideline that the wearing of masks be <u>strongly recommended</u>, effective tomorrow Tuesday, February 15, 2022.**

While the district is strongly recommending masks, special considerations will be given to staff and students who have underlying health conditions. District personnel will be in contact with impacted families to discuss varied mitigation strategies that may be used in these situations.

<u>It is important to note, masks are still required on school buses as public transportation guidelines are governed by Federal Regulations, therefore we ask students to carry a mask with them daily.</u>

While we all want to put the pandemic in our rearview mirror, we have learned the past few years that a COVID surge may occur and there may be a time when the district, building, or specific classes may require masks for a short period of time.

While the district's mask policy is transitioning to strongly recommended, our other mitigation strategies will remain consistent and in place:

- Cleaning protocols
- Social distancing to the greatest extent possible
- Frequent hand washing and proper hygiene
- Students or staff with symptoms or not feeling well should remain home until a minimum of five days has passed since symptoms first appeared; asymptomatic; at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication; diarrhea/vomiting have ceased for 24 hours and symptoms have improved; OR a documented alternative diagnosis.
- Positive COVID-19 students and staff will be excluded for a minimum of five (5) days and up to ten (10) days and may return once their symptoms have subsided.
- School health care professionals will continue to collaborate with area health department officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with <u>or suspected to have</u> or exposed to COVID-19, including making notifications to staff and parents as soon as possible

The school district's focus throughout the school year has been to provide a safe environment for students and staff, and maintain a consistent schedule allowing our students to interact with their peers and teachers academically and socially. We recognize there will be different views regarding whether or not to wear masks at school, however, bullying or inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Regardless of an individual's choice whether or not to wear a mask, they should be treated with respect.

Last, I want to remind our communities and families that our district employees pride themselves in working with families and our communities to see students grow, mature and develop into young adults throughout their time attending Collinsville CUSD 10.   As we move forward in these challenging times, I ask everyone to remember, the strength of our school district is the pride and support our communities, families and staff show our students by working together. This quality is one of our district's greatest assets and should be everyone's focus in the days, weeks and months ahead! #thekahokway

Sincerely,

Mark B. Skertich, Ed.D.
Superintendent