



Tarkio R- I School District

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Home of the Indians

Administration

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July 1, 2020

Dear Tarkio R-I Families,

Hello! I hope this letter finds you healthy and having a great summer!

We want to share our preparations for a safe opening to the 20-21 school year. Please know a lot of research, thought and discussion has gone into this plan. Some will agree with the plans, and some will not. Please keep in mind this plan was developed based on the community survey responses and the most current information we have. The plan is not a guarantee that the district will have no COVID cases, but is a plan to keep our staff and students as safe as possible while providing the quality education students need. This will be quite a lengthy letter, but we hope it is informative and answers some of the questions you may have.

A number of resources are used as we prepare to open school on **August 24**. The **Atchison County Health Department** has worked tirelessly to assist us in making plans to attend school, while protecting our students and staff. Our guidance comes from the **Center for Disease Control (CDC)**, the **Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and Children's Mercy Hospital**. Other resources used are from **the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)**, **Missouri School Board Association (MSBA)** and **Missouri United School Insurance Council (MUSIC)**.

We thank you for your participation in the survey sent out the first week of July! It was helpful in gathering information about our school community's thoughts on returning to school and in creating a re-entry plan. The responses made it very clear that parents think students need to be back in school with face-to-face learning a priority. The survey also indicated you trust your school custodial crew and the staff, will do their best to protect your child(ren).

The following precautions are a baseline response to help keep COVID spread none to minimal.

Enhanced sanitizing and cleaning is always done to avoid the spread of any communicable disease, but much more diligence is needed to protect against COVID-19. Students will wash hands more frequently and hand sanitizer will be available to use throughout the day. Students will wipe their desks, keyboards and personal items throughout the day. No sharing of any personal supplies such as Chromebooks, pencils, crayons, scissors, play-doh, etc. is allowed. Students will need to bring their own water bottles, as water fountains are closed. The district has put in new water bottle filling stations for students. The custodians have prepared an enhanced cleaning and sanitizing plan as well. Several pieces of equipment were purchased to allow for more efficient disinfecting and sanitizing, specifically a sprayer for items such as locker rooms, locker handles, door knobs, playground equipment, railings, desks, etc.

Social Distancing-Students will be 6 feet apart unless 6 feet is not possible, then students will be as far apart as possible. Plans are being made to provide as much distance as possible in situations where students tend to congregate, such as between classes, lunch, arrival to school and departure. Plexiglass dividers will be used when students are learning in close contact, such as group work or projects.

Situational Awareness-Students will be in cohorts (assigned groups) to allow for efficient contact tracing in the event a positive case is identified within the school building. Mixing of cohorts will be limited. Student desks will be spaced as far apart as possible, all desks will face the same way, and students will have seating arrangements. Seating arrangements are expected in any circumstance where 6 foot distancing is not possible. Staggering of schedules for lunch and release of classes will help limit contact between persons.

Masks-The district will follow the most recent *Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Face Coverings in Schools* from the CDC and the DHSS. There will be times during the school day when students will be required to wear a mask (group work, hallways, etc.), but will not be required at all times. **Students will need to provide their own masks for school.** We understand some individuals have different needs when it comes to wearing masks. This will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Physical Activity-Physical activity is encouraged by the resources mentioned above, so students will have PE and recess. The instructors for these classes and activities have plans in place to follow necessary precautions. If possible, these activities will be outside. As well, activities will be no contact. If equipment for recess and PE is used, it will be sanitized between classes.

Choir/Band-DHSS and DESE advise districts to take significant precautions for choir and band. The district will have class outside or in an area large enough (gym or TAC) to spread students out to sing or play instruments.

Other Classrooms-All staff will follow the same protocols for protecting students, but some classrooms have unique circumstances. Each teacher will define issues that may be unique to their classroom or students, and plan accordingly.

Attendance- Normal attendance policies will be in effect, except for COVID related absence; however, there will be no attendance awards or finals as long as we are fighting COVID-19. **PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME IF THEY ARE SICK!**

Isolation Rooms-isolation rooms will be available for students who are symptomatic and waiting to go home. Symptomatic students will be required to wear a mask.

Transportation- Any help you can give us with transporting your children to and from school is greatly appreciated!

The less students on the bus, the less exposure created. The bus is the tightest space we have to work with when it comes to social distancing and sharing space. Students who ride the bus will be **required** to wear a mask. (Drivers are also **required** to wear a mask.) Students will have a seating arrangement and families will be required to sit together. Buses will load back to front, and when possible, unload from front to back. Sanitizing will be done after each route. When the weather allows and there are no safety concerns, windows will be open. We will continue to have in-town bus stops, but the times may look different from last year, so we can have less students on the bus at a time. Information will be sent to those bus riders in town at a later date. Transporting your students to and from school is the best option to allow space for those who have to ride district transportation.

Cafeteria/Food Service-The cafeteria is taking precautionary measures as well. K-12 breakfasts will be grab-n-go in their respective buildings. Students will have three menu choices every day: hot lunch, salad or sandwich/wrap. All meals will be served using disposable trays and utensils. There will be no self-service food bars. All condiments will be pre-packaged. Elementary school lunch shifts will be staggered so students will be spaced as far apart as possible. Seating arrangements and cohort grouping is necessary. To avoid congestion in the lunchroom, HS meals will be delivered to their homerooms where students can be spaced 6 feet apart. In the event school is closed, food service will still be available at designated pick up spots. More information will follow for meal service during school closure.

Visitors-No one will be allowed to enter the building, unless it is deemed absolutely necessary. If you need to pick up your child, call the office and they will have your student waiting at the door. If you have something to drop off, place it in the basket and buzz the office. If you have something to pick up, it will be placed in the basket for you. If someone has to enter the building, they will be asked to sign in, note the time in and out, and record their building location for contact tracing purposes. Masks will be required for all visitors.

Arrival-Students will not be allowed to come to school before 7:45 AM. This will eliminate congestion in the mornings. HS students should arrive at 7:45 AM and go straight to their assigned location. ES students will go straight to their classroom.

Departure-Students will dismiss at staggered times to avoid congestion at the end of the day. The ES will dismiss bus riders at 2:55. Walkers will dismiss once the buses are gone, and car riders will dismiss at 3:05. The HS will dismiss car riders and drivers at 2:50, walkers at 2:55 and bus riders at 3:00. The HS will utilize different sets of doors to avoid congestion.

Exclusion from School-Students and employees will be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the following symptoms:

- 1) a) A fever of 100.4 degrees or greater b) cough c) shortness of breath or difficulty breathing d) chills e) repeated shaking with chills f) muscle pain g) headache h) sore throat i) loss of taste or smell
- 2) Additional medical inquiries of staff and students is possible. When a student is sick, we will ask what symptoms they are experiencing.
- 3) Siblings or other students living in the same household that exhibit symptoms will be excluded from school.
- 4) The district may recommend a student or staff member self-quarantine for 14 calendar days if they have had close contact with a person with COVID symptoms or diagnosis of COVID, or if they have recently traveled somewhere considered a “hot spot” by the CDC. All identified close contacts of a confirmed COVID case will be in quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure.

Return to School-Students and staff may return to school when they satisfy the recommendations of the CDC. They must meet all conditions listed.

- 1) **Tested Person:** A tested person, with a positive test, will remain in isolation for 10 days from the day their symptoms begin. In addition, they must have at least 24 hours of improved symptoms and no fever or use of fever reducing medications. If symptoms are not improved, the case will remain in isolation for additional days.
- 2) **Untested Person:** If a person is not tested, they must be fever free for 72 hours, other symptoms must improve and at least ten calendar days have passed since symptoms started.
- 3) **Tested Positive, but asymptomatic-** - An asymptomatic confirmed case will be in home isolation for 10 days from their test date. The actual test date is day 0. For example, if a teacher tests positive on August 1, the teacher will be eligible to return to school on August 12, as long as they remain asymptomatic.
- 4) **Students and staff may return if a health care provider approves them in writing.** We prefer all exclusions are approved to return by a health care provider.

When a positive case is identified within a school building:

- 1) The Atchison County Health Department will be notified immediately to assess the risk created by the positive case being in the building.
- 2) The school community (parents, staff) will be notified of a positive case.
- 3) 1-5 day closure is possible to allow time to assess risk, contact those who may be affected and for cleaning and disinfecting. Evaluation will be done on a case-by-case basis.
- 4) Students and staff members considered to be in close contact with the positive case are required to quarantine for 14 days.
- 5) All school activities will be canceled when school is not in session.
- 6) Depending on the level of risk created, increased measures of precautions may be implemented. This could mean implementation of daily screenings, restricting activities with equipment such as jump ropes and balls, increased use of masks, or in extreme cases, alternating attendance days for students, so there is less exposure.
- 7) Remote learning will take place when school buildings are closed.
- 8) Closures due to COVID will be communicated the same as inclement weather closures. Text alerts and news stations will be utilized.

When community spread is moderate to substantial another level of precautions may be implemented. (Daily screenings/temperature taking, wearing masks at all times, adjustments to schedules, or alternating dates of attendance, etc.). The more substantial the spread, the more likely buildings will be closed for extended periods and remote learning will be implemented.

Remote Learning – Remote learning is expected in three different scenarios.

- 1) **Quarantined Situation**-Students who are quarantined and feel well enough to do so, should access learning remotely. We will work with students in the beginning days of school to make sure they are prepared for remote learning.

- 2) **Building or District Closure-** In the event a building or the entire district is closed, remote learning will be required. We will work with students in the beginning days of school to make sure they are prepared.
- 3) **ONLY Remote Learning** - Detailed information will be communicated to parents before school starts for families who wish to use ONLY remote learning. We are currently exploring an on-line platform for students whose families choose virtual learning rather than attend school in person. Be advised, families who choose remote learning rather than face-to-face, will have a short window of time to determine if they want to continue with the program. Otherwise, the student will have to complete the semester before re-entering face-to-face learning.

Athletics- At this point, the intent is to have athletic participation, but time will certainly tell if it will be possible. Guidance from the MSHSAA is if school is in session face-to-face, athletics will take place. If school is not in session, all athletics, including practice and games will be canceled.

It is a parent decision whether your child participates. Please weigh the risks and benefits to your family when making a decision. Be sure to get a physical if yours has expired. If you are unsure if your physical is up-to-date, contact Joe U at untjoe@tarkio.k12.mo.us. Also, be sure to fill out the annual requirements section of the physical form, which includes insurance information, updated medical history and emergency contacts.

We are doing our best to take precautions to protect our athletes during practice and while playing. All JH and HS athletes, as well as coaches, will receive gator masks for their protection during practice and games. No sharing of water bottles. Athletes will be kept socially distanced and broken into groups when possible. Equipment will be disinfected before and after each use.

At this point, we do not plan to screen spectators before entering an event. We expect visitors and spectators to social distance, and practice precautions to be considerate of other spectators. We will have a mask section and a non-mask section to offer support to those who are at-risk. Plans are being developed for concession stands and restroom use at home events. When attending an away event, it is expected Tarkio students and fans will follow the home school's requests.

What Families Can Do to Help-

- Please, keep your child home when they are sick!** Home is the first line of defense in this battle.
- Check with your child to see if they have symptoms of any illness before you put them on the bus or drop them off at school.
- Practice good prevention habits within your family. This helps students to practice the same habits at school.
- Send a clean mask with your child every day.
- Have a plan for where your child(ren) will go in the event that school must be closed.
- Seek guidance from the school, the Atchison County Health Department, or your doctor if you have questions.

In closing, I hope everyone is excited to come back to school in spite of the COVID issue. I know I am! I can't wait to see students learning and having fun again. It just may look different for a while. I know this communication cannot possibly include all of the details of what is being planned to protect our staff and students, but hopefully it provides some guidance as we start a new year. Staff will continue to make plans at our back to school meetings from August 18-August 21. New information and resources appear daily, and things can change quickly. We will absolutely do our best to keep you informed. Please do not hesitate to contact your building principals or me with questions or concerns you may have. Thank you for your cooperation and patience in this unprecedented time. Together, we will get through this.

Sincerely,

Karma Coleman