

December 17, 2021

USD 345 Staff and Families:

We are closing in on the end of the second quarter and we've almost made it to winter break. Before we depart for the holiday season next week, I would like to take some time to provide some updates.

#### Mask Update

With vaccinations now available for elementary students, the board voted to remove the mask requirement for kindergarten through sixth grade students and staff, beginning January 4, 2022. Masks will be recommended, but not required, for all students and staff in kindergarten through 12th grade when we return from winter break. Masks are still required on buses per federal requirements. Preschool students and staff will continue to follow the mask requirement established in August. The board will review the Safe Return to School Plan again at their January meeting.

#### COVID-19 Clusters

COVID-19 continues to be an everyday risk in our schools. KDHE reports [clusters](#) on a weekly basis and some of our schools have been listed as a cluster site. We are made aware of the finalized list at the same time the public is informed. If you find this information helpful in family decisions, please check the [KDHE website](#), which is updated every Wednesday. You can also check our [weekly COVID-19 dashboard](#) for local impact, which is updated every Monday.

#### COVID Vaccinations

Vaccinations are the leading strategy for protecting the health of the community. Vaccination remains highly protective against severe symptomatic disease from COVID-19. We are partnering with KDHE for another upcoming vaccination clinic in our district. As soon as the details are finalized, we will get information out to staff and families. Please consider vaccinations and boosters for those who are eligible.

#### Online Safety

I recently met with a group of parents, law enforcement, a behavioral healthcare professional, and staff to discuss online student safety and security. The team identified some of the following action steps: updating our See Something, Say Something reporting tool to become an anonymous reporting tool; continual messaging to students encouraging them to speak up and help each other be safe online; more training on appropriate technology use for students and staff; and providing parents educational opportunities with more information on how online security works in our district and helpful tips on how parents can keep their children safe online at home. We will begin to follow through with these action steps and keep parents and staff informed of our progress.

Online safety and threat concerns continue to be a trend in schools across the country, including recent reports of school violence threats made on TikTok. This most recent TikTok “challenge” was determined to be a national trend and did not originate in our district. All threats reported are taken seriously and are thoroughly investigated. Please continue to report all threats, no matter how insignificant they may seem, so we can continue to investigate and follow through with each and every threat to safety. The district’s [See Something, Say Something](#) reporting tool is available and continuously monitored.

In conclusion, it’s no secret that health and safety concerns have been atop the list of issues for school districts these last couple of years. Our schools have an incredible staff that care about our children. Our schools take every possible measure to maintain safe and healthy learning environments for all students. Please contact us if you feel your student could benefit from additional social-emotional support.

I can’t thank our students, staff, parents, and community enough for their support and assistance through it all. With new apps, negative social media trends, and risks continuing to emerge, it will take all of us working together at school and at home to keep everyone safe and to continue making a positive impact for our students and school community.

I wish you all a healthy and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steve Noble  
Superintendent