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# Bearcat Happenings

by Gasconade County R-1 Superintendent: Dr. Scott Smith

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The first day of school is just around the corner! Classes will resume on Monday, August 24, for the Gasconade County R-1 School District.

Here at Gasconade County R-1, we have been working hard throughout the summer to ensure our students have a successful 2020-2021 school year! As you know, this school year will be unlike any other due to COVID-19. As previously mentioned, our administrative team members have participated in numerous meetings over the summer to determine how best to meet the needs of our students and staff this year. Building administrators will be communicating changes and updates to parents on a regular basis.

Throughout summer planning meetings, the administrative team took time to reflect on the previous year and plan for the upcoming year. As many of you know, our building administrators include: Mrs. Kendra Brune, Elementary Principal; Mr. Todd Anderson, Assistant High School Principal/Activities Director; Mr. Chip Stutzman, High School Principal. This year we welcome Mr. Matt Mueller as our Middle School Principal! These building leaders bring a wealth of educational knowledge to our team, a love of learning and a heart for kids! I commend them and our entire staff for their willingness to work together through the COVID-19 challenges.

Once again, I want to take this opportunity to share some of the safety measures in place in our district. They include:

- Reviewing best hygiene practices with students,
- Added hand sanitizing stations throughout the district,
- Frequent washing of hands and/or use of sanitizer,
- Enhanced disinfecting by custodial staff,
- Disinfectant of buses between routes,
- Addition of a bus route to alleviate crowding,
- Assigned seating on buses with families grouped together,
- Reorganizing classrooms to provide greater social distancing,
- Arranging schedules to limit student interactions,
- Social distancing as much as possible,
- Only allowing the use of water bottles rather than water fountains,
- Water bottle refill stations added in all buildings,
- Breakfast in the classroom offered at elementary and middle schools,
- Greater separation of students at lunchtime,
- Eliminating cafeteria self-serve options,
- Additional protocol for school nurses and additional health screenings for students,
- Encouraging face coverings to be worn.

Our maintenance and custodial crews have taken and will continue to take extra precaution to make certain our facilities are safe for students and staff. We have added extra staffing and cleaning equipment to assist us in this endeavor.

We also encourage parents to provide transportation for their children if at all possible. By decreasing the number of bus riders, it will allow for greater separation between students that require bus transportation. Also, masks are required for all visitors in school buildings. I also want to make note that we will not allow parents to walk their children into school on the first day. As a parent, I realize that this is an event many look forward to; however, to alleviate congestion in the buildings, we just can't allow it this year. We appreciate your understanding of these changes as we navigate this together.

Recently, area superintendents, principals and athletic directors in the Four Rivers Conference, met to discuss extra-curricular activities amidst COVID-19. From that meeting, it was determined that we will all follow the same guidelines when hosting events. These guidelines include 50% occupancy and a limited number of tickets for visiting teams. Additional information will be forthcoming to our parents and community members in the coming weeks. Again, I realize this is a major adjustment for us. Thank you for your understanding and support.

We are optimistic going forward this school year, as we take additional precautions. As a district, we will work to meet the educational needs of our students. For those that have chosen in class instruction, we sincerely hope that we can continue as normal as possible. Yet, we know that circumstances can change quickly. We will be adaptive for what may come our way. Stay up to date on press releases, events, and activities by visiting our website at [www.hermann.k12.mo.us](http://www.hermann.k12.mo.us) and by liking our Facebook page "Gasconade Co. R-1 School District."

As I enter my third year here at Hermann, I am pleased with the level of commitment by our staff to provide a quality education to our students. Challenges may come our way, but our caring staff will continue to provide outstanding instruction in or outside the classroom! Please know that I am always available for questions, concerns, or comments.

Thank you for your continued support of the Gasconade County R-1 School District. Go Bearcats!



From the desk of Dr. Scott Smith, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Gasconade County R-1 Schools

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