
Bearcat Happenings

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

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

This summer has been full of many learning opportunities for the administrators and teachers of Gasconade County R-1 School District. We have taken time this summer to ensure we are ready for our students to have a successful 2020-21 school year. Many of our teachers have been updating their curriculum, taking college classes, and attending professional development opportunities to ensure they are well prepared for students to come August 24th. Our administrative team members have participated in numerous meetings to determine how best to meet the needs of our students and staff this year amid the COVID-19 situation.

The last five months have been a challenge for us all. There have been many changes regarding how people interact and go through their everyday lives. Education has also been impacted in a variety of ways. As educators we want to do everything we can to help our students overcome barriers in a safe learning environment. With all the chaos that has been taking place in our country the last few months, our students need the consistency of school more than ever.

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,
- 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.

As many of you know, we just completed a full month of on-site summer school. We were able to include these protocols into daily operations and made adjustments as necessary to keep our students and staff safe. We are thankful for the educators and staff that rallied to make summer school possible. It was a much needed learning opportunity for our students!

As an educator, I feel very strongly that students should be back in school and receiving the quality education our parents have come to expect from Gasconade County R-1. However, to do this, we need the help of our parents and community. We are now at a time in which we cannot risk going out into the community when we are sick. If your child is sick or has been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms, please do not send them to school. Our attendance policy has been adjusted. The main focus is on keeping our school healthy. We have laid out some self-screening protocols in our re-entry plan, which we ask all parents to follow. For more information on the re-entry plan, please visit the school website at www.hermann.k12.mo.us or go by the district office for a printed copy.

As many of you know, there are two options outlined in our re-entry plan for parents to choose as the educational delivery method for their children. The first option is conducted by our teachers on campus. The second option is virtual instruction and will be conducted by an outside company, Educere for students K-6th grade, and Mizzou Academy for students 7-12th grade.

A great deal of research was conducted prior to the selection of these companies. We chose outside companies to provide virtual instruction because as a district we currently do not have the capacity to provide both with our current staff for an extended period of time. Both companies will follow Missouri learning standards. The deadline for choosing the virtual learning option is Friday, August 7th. However, for families choosing on campus instruction, if we have a quarantine, class dismissal, or are closed for any other reason, our staff will provide distance learning during those possible short term leaves.

If you would like to learn more about the learning options for Gasconade County R-1 students and other topics regarding the beginning of school, you are welcome to attend one of our upcoming informational sessions held on **Wednesday, August 5th, at 6:00 p.m. and Thursday, August 6th at 10:30 a.m. in the high school auditorium.**

Please know that as a district we are trying our very best and we have our students' best interest at heart. This will likely be a challenging year for everyone. This is uncharted territory for education. We are trying to maintain a positive attitude and we ask that you do the same. Our students are looking at us for guidance and support. Thank you for helping us in this endeavor.

Here at Gasconade County R-1, we are very fortunate to have a quality group of educators and staff that will go above and beyond for our students. Thank you for entrusting us to educate your children. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your child's building administrator or myself. As always, Go Bearcats!



From the desk of
Dr. Scott Smith, Superintendent
