

Dear Parents & Guardians,

As we wrap up the second week of school at Gasconade County R-1, I commend our students, parents, teachers, and staff as we navigate the COVID-19 challenges. Even with the challenges that have presented themselves, it is good to have the school doors open and work toward some type of normalcy.

As many of you know, Gasconade County R-1 School District has experienced some positive COVID-19 results this week. At this time, we have had a total of 4 positive cases of COVID-19. Three of these cases were at the high school, and one was at the middle school. As a result of these positive cases at school and positive cases throughout the community, we currently have 162 students on quarantine for 14 days. The majority of quarantined students are in 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Following the guidelines of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and the 4 county health departments in which our district works with (Franklin, Gasconade, Montgomery, Warren), an individual is placed on quarantine when they are less than six feet apart for longer than 15 minutes. When the health department notifies us of a positive COVID-19 case, we evaluate where the student has been for longer than 15 minutes while at school and who was near him/her during that time period. As a district, we have worked diligently to have seating charts for all classrooms, bus routes, cafeteria, etc. Whether or not the students wear masks, they are still included in the contact tracing. Once the contact tracing is complete, we contact students' parents informing them of potential exposure. The appropriate health department then contacts the families, works with them on quarantine protocol and advises them on COVID-19 symptoms, etc.

Considering our current situation, we must take the next preventive measure. Starting next **Tuesday, September 8, all 7-12 grade students will be required to wear a face covering when they cannot maintain 6 feet distance of social distance.** We will start with 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade students and adjust as necessary. District staff who are working with students and cannot maintain 6 feet of social distance will also be wearing face coverings. Although at this time, this will not help with the current quarantine issues, we are hopeful we can slow the spread of COVID-19 in our schools for the safety of our students, staff, and community.

As I have shared previously, this summer we added several precautions to keep our students and staff safe. This includes increased disinfecting throughout the district, cleaning desks between classes, cleaning high touch surfaces throughout the day, rearranging classrooms to allow greater distancing, enhanced cleaning of buses, and the addition of water bottle refill stations, to name a few. We know that these efforts have made a difference.

Although our safety procedures will lower the exposure rate, we cannot control what takes place outside the school setting. Therefore, we ask if your child shows any signs of illness, please keep them home. The only way we will keep our school open is with your help.

I hope you understand our position. Thank you for your cooperation. We will get through this situation together. Stay healthy & go Bearcats!

Sincerely,

Scott Smith  
Superintendent of School  
Gasconade County R-1 School District  
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