

Update – October 2, 2020

Dear Parents,

During the school board meeting last night, the board approved recommendations for adjustments to the district's COVID-19 Response Plan. I will do my best to communicate the immediate, short-term, changes that have occurred. Our entire COVID-19 Response Plan can be found on our website:

<https://www.d55.k12.id.us/>

We have also posted a draft copy of the plan so that our parents can see exactly how the plan was changed, a "Frequently Asked Questions" document for our parents, and a decision tree to help families determine the best course of action for their student(s).

Summary of the changes

During the "Moderate Risk" level, the Blackfoot School District will hold class with full attendance Monday through Thursday. This means beginning Monday, October 5th, all students are welcome to attend school. The board also approved the new "close contact quarantine procedures" which places a strong emphasis on the wearing of face coverings. The board did not approve a face covering mandate, but it did provide a means to encourage and motivate all to wear a face covering when proper social distancing is not possible. The board also clarified language in the plan regarding if a teacher needs to ask students to wear a face covering in their classroom and how that requirement is to be communicated to parents. Other changes which may come into play, included the change in our response to the "High Risk" level, as well as the "Critical Risk" level. Please, if you need more details about the changes, the entire plan can be found on our website.

Face Coverings

It is my belief that the board agreed with my sentiment that the enforcement of a face covering mandate is unrealistic for our community at this time. However, I also feel the board supported my approach that the more we can encourage and motivate students and staff to wear a face covering, the better we will be at slowing the spread of COVID-19. As I have stated many times before, I want our schools to be open. Our community is seeing a higher than desired number of active cases. **What we do next will determine how our school year will look moving forward.** We strongly encourage the wearing of face coverings when social distancing is not possible. With the increase in attendance, we are likely to see more cases in our schools. Each new case brings with it the need to establish quarantine procedures and identify potential close contact individuals. If we want our students to be in school and not have to quarantine for an extended period of time, I urge you to encourage them to wear a face covering. I know there are students who cannot do that, we will accommodate them as long as we are aware of the circumstances.

Extra-Curricular Activities

There is really no way around this, **we need to do better.** Again, I want these activities to continue. I cannot see school without these activities. Please help us keep these activities going. I know it is unpopular, but we have limited seating capacity to 40%. We have done that to help provide proper social distancing. If you are unable to properly social distance from individuals outside of your

household members, please wear a face covering during the activity. Please let your students know that if they want to be in the student section at the event, they must wear a face covering while in the student section. There is literally no possible way to maintain proper social distancing in that section. If they choose to not wear a face covering, they will be free to watch the event from a different area.

In conclusion, the board and I hope our students, parents, and staff understand we are doing our best. This response plan will likely go through more changes as the situation evolves, and we learn more. Please don't interpret this as weakness or caving to pressure. Without a doubt, at all times each of our board members has in mind the safety of our students and staff, and does their best to make sound decisions for the education of our children. Always remember:

Blackfoot Strong!!
Together We Overcome!!!!

Sincerely,

Brian Kress