



May 19, 2021

Prairie Families:

This letter is being sent as a follow-up to the [5-16-21 communication](#) regarding IDPH guidance related to COVID-19 masking and contact tracing. While the new IDPH guidance came as a surprise, it is important for us to evaluate all guidance in the context of our district. Throughout the past 15 months, we have aligned practices with IDPH, the CDC, and Linn County Public Health to the greatest extent practical to achieve our goal of safe onsite instruction.

After further consideration of this new guidance and weighing the academic impact and health impacts of this change, we will continue requiring face masks in accordance with our return to learn plan for all students while in College Community School buildings and sites through June 5, including school busses. No additional changes to mitigation strategies will be announced prior to the end of the school year.

The following previously announced changes remain in effect:

- June 5, College Community Schools will move to voluntary masking, except on busses and school transportation. This decision is subject to change based on local conditions as they develop throughout the summer.
- Students will no longer be required to wear face coverings while outside or engaged in heavy physical activity in large indoor areas like gyms.
 - *In these areas, there is a high volume of air and students have the ability to space from others*
- Contact tracing protocols per the new guidance will be followed.
 - *In January, the School Board voted to follow IDPH guidance for quarantining for the remainder of the school year*
- All CCSD staff will be required to wear face masks when interacting with students or the public through at least June 30, regardless of vaccination status, if not interacting with the public, staff are encouraged to follow latest CDC guidance on masking for vaccinated individuals.
 - *When not in the presence of students or the community, staff may follow CDC guidance for vaccinated individuals*

In addition to challenges outlined in the 5-16-21 communication, the following rationale supports this decision:

- 1) CDC and Linn County Health still recommend face masks in schools
- 2) Executive Order No. 13998 that went into effect 2/1/2021, "Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel," states that immediate action must be taken to require mask-wearing on domestic modes of transportation. This includes Public School Buses.
- 3) Given the number of changes required of students and families this year, another significant change in procedures and routines related to voluntary masking is not feasible due to the impact on teaching and learning at this critical time.
- 4) Families choosing to send their students to school at the start of the year and mid-year were notified that students would be required to wear masks as part of our mitigation strategies. This notification influenced family decisions to attend school onsite.
- 5) Procedures for teaching and responding to student-to-student interactions related to mask choices must be developed prior to implementing new masking policies/practices

Thank you for your continued support and understanding.

In Service,
Doug Wheeler, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools