



GORDON-RUSHVILLE

Public Schools

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September 3, 2020

Dear GRPS Parents,

I'm writing to give you a summary of how we, as a board, approved the GRPS Back to School Plan. In early July, we formed a "Back to School" committee comprised of three board members, our administration, and a handful of teachers (at least one from each building). We decided to use the Panhandle Public Health District's (PPHD) school guidance (http://www.pphd.org/COVID-19_schools.html) as our starting point. We went through several iterations of the Plan, masks being the hottest discussion topic. The Back to School committee finalized the Plan and the school board unanimously approved it during the August school board meeting.

Here's a brief summary of the plan (posted on our website <http://www.grmustangs.org/>). It follows the PPHD's guidance using four "risk levels" for our community (Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red). The risk levels helped the committee determine the mask posture in the Plan. Masks are recommended, not required, at the Green level. However, at the Yellow level and above, the plan requires masks. I understand that other schools "aren't requiring masks"; however, I suggest you read their plans carefully and look at trends of, and reasons for, school closures in Nebraska.

Another important and sometimes overlooked point; while PPHD does not require masks, their quarantine procedures are heavily based on whether or not "close contacts" were wearing masks. Again, you can find information on their website listed above. A summary of this guidance is; if a masked person tests positive, all unmasked "close contacts" need to be quarantined, whereas masked "close contacts" need only monitor for symptoms. If an unmasked person tests positive, all masked AND unmasked "close contacts" need to quarantine. This, in my opinion, is the driving factor for the mask requirement at GRPS. We want to avoid quarantining an entire class and/or staff. Mass quarantines could ultimately lead to a school closure. It is important to note that mask use within our district has already avoided PPHD quarantining almost 100 kids because of positive or presumptive positive cases.

I love America, and I don't like people telling me what to do, but I'm not a scientist. I understand that requiring masks is a polarizing topic with evidence supporting both sides. Honestly, I don't like wearing a mask and I don't think many people do. However, my personal opinion won't affect PPHD's quarantine procedures. As a parent, I want to keep my kids in school. The remote learning we experienced this spring was not fun. I'm not a teacher and I firmly believe that our kids need to be in the classroom with professional educators.

SUPERINTENDENT

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Finally, could we have done a better job communicating our decision? Of course. Should we have included a few parents in the Back to School committee? Yes. Are we being overly cautious? Hopefully. Will things eventually change? Absolutely, I will not accept that this is the "new normal".

We appreciate your input at the board meetings, conversations on the street, phone calls, and emails. Please know that we are trying to do what we think is best for the kids, while keeping them in the classroom. We are constantly working with school administration, looking for improvements to the plan. If you have questions, comments, gripes, or praise, please give me a call at my home 308.327.2780 or email me at michael.ziller@grmustangs.org. I will do my best to answer or find the answers to your questions or direct you to someone who can.

Sincerely,

Michael Ziller
GRPS School Board President

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