



LIBERTY HILL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

301 Forrest Street | Liberty Hill, TX 78642 | Phone: (512) 260-5580 | Fax: (512) 260-5581

August 28, 2020

Good Morning Liberty Hill Parents,

First, I just want to say how proud I am of the teachers and administrators on the campus and in the district. As we all know, bringing this many students back into our schools during a pandemic is challenging. From the bus drivers, maintenance department, custodians, food service, and technology department, everyone played a role in preparing the buildings for the staff and students to have a great first day.

Thank you also to the parents and the students. It was wonderful to have you back in our schools and our classrooms. We greatly missed you while we were closed and over the summer. I have also enjoyed seeing the pictures of our Panthers that chose remote learning on social media. I cannot wait for you to return when you are ready.

The first day also brought on some confusion and frustration with a change to the mask policy. Let me start by apologizing that this was not communicated clearly to all before the start of school. This policy was changed quickly based on new COVID-19 data in our district. It should have been communicated to all parents, and for that, I apologize.

Mask Policy Change.

LHISD staff and students will wear their masks all day while inside. Teachers can give the students short mask breaks. Students do not have to wear masks during recess, outside when socially distanced, and while eating lunch.

Why did the mask policy change?

Reason 1 -We have seen our numbers increase in LHISD staff during the two weeks of staff development. The staff did everything we asked them to do, making sure to be more than 6 feet apart before removing their masks. In a room with just seven people, distanced as much as possible, the virus was spread to a second staff member by someone who contracted the virus outside of school and was asymptomatic. A few days later, both had symptoms and received confirmed positive tests. Based on the CDC protocol, this constitutes community spread. Due to the fact that masks were not worn (even though they were socially distanced), multiple staff members had to be quarantined.

Reason 2 - If a student wears a mask in a classroom and comes down with the virus, we consider the rest of the classroom safe as long as the other students and teacher were wearing a mask. If socially-distanced students are not wearing masks in the classroom, then several students and possibly the class would have to go home and quarantine. The goal is to minimize exposure and keep students at school.



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Reason 3 - We have a large number of students returning in person, which is great. However, this significantly reduces our ability to social distance. Teachers are doing a great job keeping their classrooms decluttered, and rooms are being cleaned regularly. But it only takes one person to contract the virus and have contact with others at close distance, for all to be considered close contact if masks are not being worn.

I know this is an unpopular decision as many do not want to wear a mask at all, much less all day. However, this decision was made in an effort to keep all staff and students safe and keep the district open. The last thing anyone wants is to come back to school only to have the joy of returning stopped due to virus outbreaks causing the school to have to close again. We are seeing examples across the state of school districts that have opened, and are now closed for two weeks due to a spike in COVID cases. At our high school, we currently have a handful of students who, through two seemingly harmless gatherings, contracted the virus. This has resulted in the need for more than 65 students to be quarantined for 14 days.

Countywide, numbers are trending in the right direction. We are hoping that soon we can allow more mask breaks when socially distanced, and eventually have wearing masks to be a choice made by parents and students. Until that time, the mask policy will remain in effect in an effort to keep staff and students safe.

To help keep everyone informed, LHISD is in the process of creating a district-wide dashboard that will track COVID cases by campus and across the district. Remember, our number one goal is to keep everyone safe so that schools remain open. That dashboard will be posted on our Return to Learn web page and will be updated weekly.

Thank you,

Steven Snell
Superintendent