

# WEISER SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 431

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September 19, 2021

Dear Parents and Patrons,

I would like to provide you with some updates, background information, and provide little clarity on COVID-19 issues.

It is important to understand that it remains the desire of the Weiser School District to continue to offer a full-time in-person learning experience for WSD students throughout the school year.

On Monday, September 13<sup>th</sup> the WSD began implementing new COVID-19 mitigation strategies in an effort to help slow the potential transmission of COVID-19 during the school day. Several strategies were implemented, including the addition of a mask mandate for students and staff when they are inside district facilities during the normal school day. The Board of Trustees plans to review conditions as well as any need for continued mitigation strategies at their next meeting, which is scheduled for October 13<sup>th</sup>.

On Thursday, September 16<sup>th</sup> the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare activated *crisis standards of care* procedures for health care facilities across Idaho as a result of the increased pressure COVID-19 hospitalizations had placed on health care facilities throughout the State. Saint Luke's implemented the **crisis standards** in all of their facilities on Thursday.

Following the Thursday announcement, health care administrators and doctors for facilities throughout Idaho held a 90 minute press conference to discuss COVID-19 and the strain it has put on the Idaho health care system. During the conference several administrators and doctors called upon the citizens of our State to take personal action to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in order to help relieve some of the pressure currently experienced by health care facilities and providers. Additionally, they also called on schools to implement strategies designed to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, including the wearing of masks for students, staff, and visitors when they are inside school buildings and in other crowded settings.

The Weiser School District began this school year with limited COVID-19 mitigation strategies in place. We began much the same way that we ended last school year. However, it is important to understand that conditions are now significantly different.

From **April 1, 2021 through May 19, 2021** a total of **3 confirmed cases of COVID-19** among students and staff were reported to school officials (reported directly by parents and staff). In contrast, the following numbers of confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported by parents and staff during a recent three week period this fall:

**August 23-27 = 20 confirmed cases**  
**August 30–Sept. 3 = 22 confirmed cases**  
**September 6-10 = 36 confirmed cases**

Staff absenteeism has challenged our ability to staff classrooms and other key positions on a daily basis, especially when we have multiple staff members who are out for several days at a time.

It is our hope that our efforts will help keep all of our schools open during this most difficult time.

Additionally, I have been asked if the school district received extra funding and incentives for implementing masking requirements. The answer is NO! However, I want to clarify.

Federal funds have been made available to states and other entities in order to address conditions created by COVID-19. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF) created different sets of funds that may be accessed by school districts across the nation and in Idaho in order to respond to the pandemic and continue to provide educational services to students. The funds have been made available at different times, have deadlines for their use, and have been made available for specific and approved expenditures only as outlined by the feds or by the State.

The WSD has used a portion of its available funds to improve air quality and sanitation within all school buildings. Last year we purchased air purification devices and installed them in HVAC systems, and purchased sanitation equipment and products in order to address sanitation needs within buildings. We have purchased masks in order to ensure masks or face shields are available for students and staff, and we purchased and installed plexi-glass sneeze guards in various locations within schools. We purchased technology and devices such as Chromebooks and hotspots to assist with the delivery of instruction, purchased curriculum, and purchased other educational materials and software. We provided a stipend for staff last year for their extra efforts to modify instruction since March of 2020. All are approved uses of the funds. The funds are available on a reimbursement basis, meaning the District has the opportunity to seek reimbursement for qualifying expenses already made.

We have had funds that could only be used to address social emotional learning, or for the purchase of an approved Learning Management System for our district (there are only 5 State *approved* LMS options). We currently have funds that are available for use through December 30, 2021 that may only be used to address student learning loss as a result of the pandemic, or may be used for credit recovery for secondary students. We are not required to access these funds, and they are only available should we choose to make an approved purchase. The funds are not available to assist with other general fund expenditures and are only available for their designated use. And, there are strings attached and requirements placed on the District if we seek reimbursement for qualifying expenses.

In short, there are federal funds that are available to help us respond to the impact of COVID-19 in our schools, but the funds have specific uses and they are not available to assist with general fund expenses. Although funds may be spent on purchasing things such as masks that are intended to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, the district does not receive increased general fund dollars or incentives as a result of implementing any specific measures. We may, however, seek reimbursement for qualifying COVID-19 expenditures.

Please hang in there with us as we work through our current COVID-19 conditions.

Respectfully,

Wade Wilson, Superintendent

HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

WEISER SCHOOLS

RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

[www.weiserschools.org](http://www.weiserschools.org)