



SALIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT R-32-J

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Joe Smith, President

Jodi Breckenridge Petit, Vice-President, Cheri Post, Treasurer

Directors: Carrie Mattix, Jeannie Peters, Joel McBride, Greg Reed

David Blackburn, Superintendent

Dear Salida Community,

The Salida School Board wanted to reach out and share some additional insight into the reinstitution of a mask mandate, until at least 10/28/21, for students and staff in kindergarten through 12th grade.

First, our goal is to keep our kids at school for in-person learning as much as possible. The ability to keep kids in school is important for their growth, learning, development, and social interactions, but it also supports our families and community. Remote learning impacts parents and their ability to go to work, which in turn causes additional workforce challenges for our community being able to operate their businesses and provide the services we need.

Last year, we found significant success in keeping students in school, by using layers of protection that included staying home when sick, hand cleaning/sanitizing, enhancements to the air-filtration systems, co-horting, social distancing/spacing, and the use of masks. One of the key aspects we learned last year is that as we gained more clarity, we were able to stay fluid and make timely and appropriate adjustments to manage potential cases.

This year, we must continue to stay flexible in our response as the disease and case counts fluctuate in our community. We still have layers of protection available, and will occasionally need to make adjustments to those layers as positive cases are identified. Currently, because of a significant number of people impacted by recent positive cases, a mask mandate has been issued for the health and safety of our students and staff and the stability of our community. This is one of the layers of protection that proved effective last year, and we will continue to utilize as appropriate. We know that masks are not ideal, not fun, and not something any of us enjoy, but it allows us to keep our kids in school where programming is most effective. We hope to gain more information and insight before the 28th at which time we can review the data and make a decision going forward.

While student safety is a top priority, we also must provide a safe work environment for our teachers, staff, and substitutes. Increased cases, exposures, and quarantine of staff are all daily challenges that we must overcome in order to provide in-person instruction with the appropriate supervision throughout the day. These workforce challenges are also a major factor in our decisions of making appropriate changes to our protective layers.

It is important that we share that this decision isn't made by one individual, but through the work of a team. Superintendent Blackburn, the Board of Education, our school nurses, our



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principals, local and state public health officials, and local physicians have all talked through possible scenarios to make the best choice we can for our kids and community every day based on the information available. Information comes rapidly, and timely decisions must be made when cases begin to increase. The Board of Education supports those decisions made based on the countless hours and work by our dedicated team, which has the same common goal of keeping our students and staff safe and maintaining in-person instruction. This isn't a decision that is made lightly, or without significant thought.

We also want to remind our community – **if you are sick, please stay home. If your student is sick, please keep them home.**

COVID-19 continues to impact our lives, and we will continue to review the data, current research and consult with our incredibly dedicated team of experts as we navigate the remainder of this pandemic. We are thankful for the support of our community, and are always willing to answer questions or provide clarification.

Salida School District
Board of Education