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February 15, 2021

Dear Shepherd students and families,

I hope this letter finds you all healthy as we begin the new year and look towards wrapping up our school year in the next couple of months. As the school year approaches the final couple of months, our Shepherd team consisting of the school board, administrators and teachers have looked at all the COVID restrictions we have in place and chose to revisit them for the remainder of the year. As of right now, we still have less than 50 positive cases counting both adults and students in our system. Even though our positive case count is not too high, we continue to see quarantines and students/adults being affected by those who are positive. We are still dealing with COVID on a weekly basis and are still required to follow the quarantine rules that are in place.

We looked at all the items we are currently doing for this school year and determined there were a few we could change to start moving towards operating as we have in the past, pre-COVID. With that, I want to remind you our main responsibility and purpose is to keep our schools open and kids here being educated on-site until school is out May 19th, 2021. We worked hard to address each item and determine if we could change it and still maintain a healthy and safe setting for students, staff, and the community.

Masks: As of right now the Governor has lifted the mask mandate in the state starting Friday, February 12, 2021. We have been given more information as a school district today than we had last week. The plan from the Governor's office was to lift the mask mandate once there were liability protections in place. The legislation that was signed by the Governor for protecting business and other areas, *does not* include schools. After lengthy conversations today, it is decided it is in the best interest in keeping staff and students in school that we continue with the mask requirement while at school. Our staff/students have done well with following the expectations in place and we ask that they do so for the time being. We fully understand that there may be families that disagree with this decision. I want you to know it was not made lightly. It is our responsibility to educate the students of Shepherd and do so in a safe, on-site environment. We have a responsibility to our staff and students, as well as our parents, to continue on with on-site instruction, and we feel this decision will be one of the best ways to get us to May when school is out until September.

Transportation: Pick up times will remain the same for the remainder of the year. We will be disinfecting the buses each day in the afternoon after they have been used during the day. We will start to allow high school clubs to attend out of district events or trips if they are approved by the administration.

Health/Safety – Social Distancing: Hallway transition times will remain the same to have fewer students in the hallways at one time. We will be able to have larger group assemblies only if they can accommodate for social distancing. We will continue to not have classroom/sports volunteers for the remainder of the year.



Staff and students will be provided hand sanitizer in each classroom and building entrance. We will continue to allow more opportunities for students to be able to wash their hands during the day prior to breakfast, lunch and snack times as well as after recess. We will continue to disinfect throughout the day as well as have custodians continuously wipe surfaces throughout the day.

We will no longer be taking temperatures of our staff and students, however, please remember as parents/guardians, we ask that you still help us by choosing to do the right thing by keeping kids home when they are sick. If a student does not feel good the nurse will continue to assess them when they are sent to see her.

We will continue to eat lunch and breakfast in classrooms and have limited students in the lunchrooms at one time. Please note meals are still free to students for the remainder of this school year.

We will have spring concerts for our music programs and K-5 classes. Those dates will be sent home. We will manage these the same as sporting events where each student will receive passes for family members to attend.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact any of the building principals or myself.

Sincerely,

Drea O'Donnell
Superintendent

