

Parents, Guardians, Students, and Staff:

This year our main goal has been to return to full in-person instruction. We want to keep our schools open and our students in the classroom with direct instruction from their teachers. The message we have received is that our school community wants this as well. The one thing that everyone agrees on is that we all want our schools open and our students in school. No parent or educator wants a repeat of last year. With the help and understanding of our entire school community, we have been able to keep our schools open and allow the vast majority of our families to send their children to school every day.

The North Harrison School Board had asked that K-8 mask up for two weeks ending today. As a district, we have stated our intention from the start to examine the data as it relates to our school community and to track the numbers in our specific schools. We did have some early challenges. Our high school numbers did increase and have fallen back. As you know, the numbers at our other buildings went up at the start of the year. At this point they have returned to much lower levels.

Starting Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, we are going to revert to a Parent Choice Option for masking K-8 with some **important qualifiers**. We continue to *strongly* recommend masks for everyone. For our purposes a face shield is also acceptable. It is important for all parents to note that if your child continues to consistently wear a mask at school, then it is unlikely that they will be contact traced. That bears repeating; if your child continues to wear a mask at school they will not be contact traced unless there is an unusual circumstance. We will do our very best to manage the distancing and exposure minutes that the IDOH guidance outlines to accommodate everyone. Many more students are electing to wear masks at the high school and this has led to reduced contact tracing. Our data indicates that few if any of our mask wearers have come up positive. While that is not particularly scientific, it is encouraging.

***This will not be perfect.*** We believe we can make this work. However, everything will be determined by the data that we see in our buildings. It is our new normal.

Our school community must stay together in order to keep our schools open and our kids in school. **Please do not send sick kids to school.** If you have positive cases in your home, your kids have to stay home. Many of the cases we have had to process and trace have involved sick kids coming to school. Sick kids coming to school could be our undoing. We want to make this work for everyone, but everyone has to do their part.

As a reminder, ***federal regulations for public transportation require face coverings on school buses for all students and staff.*** *This federal mandate has been extended until January of 2022.* This does greatly diminish the contact tracing on buses.

We ask for your grace, patience, and understanding as we navigate this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lance Richards  
Superintendent  
North Harrison Community Schools