



Jackson-Madison County School System

NEWS ALERT

August 18, 2021

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- ***What went into the decision not to mandate masks district-wide and allow parents to opt out of mandates on a case-by-case basis?***

Our decision to return to masks optional, district-wide, was a result of the Governor's executive order. Gov. Lee gave parents the ability to opt their children out of mask mandates. That essentially voids our power to require children to wear masks. What you're seeing in larger cities - like Memphis and Nashville - is school districts working in tandem with local governments - or local health departments - to continue masks mandates they put in place jointly; either through executive orders or mandates. That's not the case in Jackson-Madison County. Schools in Jackson-Madison County were left on their own to make these types of decisions; as a result, we're making those decisions.

- ***What procedure is the district looking at taking to control rising COVID-19 cases in schools?***

As a community, we will adhere to contact tracing guidance from our local health department and medical professionals; if JMCSS families are contact by the regional health department to isolate or quarantine - parents and their children must follow those directives. However, if a family is contacted by their child's school and made aware of contact with a positive case, parents have a choice; they can quarantine their child or, after monitoring their child for symptoms and none are realized, they can choose to send their child back to school for the benefit of in-person learning. Parents should be aware that if our teachers or administrators see symptoms of Covid-19 from a student, that student will be sent home. What we have found, over the last two weeks, are several instances of relatively healthy children being sent home due to school-initiated quarantines and contact tracing. We want to do the best we can for students with the resources we have. Healthy students should be in school. Our adjustment on school-initiated quarantines does that.

- ***Is moving to virtual learning an option for the district?***

As we understand it, moving to a district-wide virtual option, outside of JASA CyberSchool, is not an option. This is due to limits the state board of education placed on school districts back in April. This won't change unless the Governor declares a state of emergency and the commissioner of education grants permission. So, in Jackson-Madison County, the only learning options are in-person learning, or virtual learning through JASA CyberSchool. Right now, due to a limited number of CyberSchool teachers, there is a waiting list for families wanting to utilize an online-learning format. Students who miss school for a prolonged period of time, due to health reason, will be eligible for homebound services through the school district.

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