

Message emailed to families on 8/5/2021:

Dear Families and Staff of Forge and Sage International Schools,

We believe in-person learning is best for children. I am writing to let you know, after our leadership team took long hard looks at Covid data since the July 20 Board meeting; in considering the vaccination status of most of our students and our surrounding population; and by embracing the imperative - frankly, moral obligation, to provide in-person learning for all of our students. **It is clear that universal, indoor masking for all people at both campuses is necessary. The effective date for this decision is 9 August 2021.**

I recognize, and our school leadership recognizes, that universal, indoor masking is not what we envisioned for the beginning of the 21-22 school year. Nonetheless, we know that it is the right thing to do in order to ensure in-person learning. The viral situation in our schools' attendance zones is rapidly worsening and this compelled us to take simple and effective measures to ensure in-person learning for the children that attend our schools.

Here are the facts we considered that bore on this decision:

- **In person learning is essential**
- Viral situation in Ada County:
 - Last week's case count was 660. The last time it was that high was in January of 21.
 - Test positivity rate is at 12%. Community transmission is considered uncontrolled above 5% positivity.
 - Cases are doubling everyday
 - Only 54% of the population over age 12 is vaccinated (CDC)
- Viral situation in Canyon County:
 - On 2 August the case count was 239. The last time it was this high was in late January/early February, *descending* from the November peak.
 - Test positivity rate is at 15.8%. Community transmission is considered uncontrolled above 5% positivity.
 - Cases are doubling everyday
 - Only 37% of the population over age 12 is vaccinated. (CDC)
- Revised quarantine guidelines for indoor classroom settings say:
 - - A covid-exposed teacher who was masked in a room filled with masked children **will not have to quarantine.** This ensures we can keep our teachers in school.
 - - When a covid positive, properly masked person has close contact with another properly masked person, only the covid positive person has to quarantine. The

exposed person just needs to monitor for symptoms and wear a mask. This keeps us from quarantining whole classes or sections of classes.

- Hundreds of our youngest students are ineligible for a vaccination right now. Both Central and Southwest Districts are reporting that Covid (Delta) cases among our youngest people are doubling and tripling. We have already had cases of covid among students at both Sage and Forge and our doors are not yet open.
- [Masks that cover the mouth and nose](#) are required. Face Shields are not adequate protection and do not meet the updated conditions for avoiding quarantine.
- Bottom line. Only exposed, unmasked/improperly masked persons and persons with covid will have to quarantine with universal masking in place.

Again, this is not where we envisioned we would be in mid-summer after the enormous success of our government's investment in vaccine research and, critically, of the success of American and German scientists had in developing effective, safe vaccines that provide powerful protection against all known variants of this virus.

Nonetheless, I, with the support of the school leadership team, will require universal, indoor masking for all persons at Sage and Forge until conditions warrant a change. In person learning is critical and we have to pursue simple and effective strategies that keep our students in classrooms.

Sincerely,

[signed]

Andy Johnson