



# JENNINGS COUNTY SCHOOL CORPORATION

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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*Teresa A. Brown, Superintendent*

August 27, 2021

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Dear Jennings County Families,

Keeping our students in school for face to face instruction continues to be our first priority. On June 17, 2021 our board approved our Panther's Prepare and Care Plan. We have stated frequently that we would monitor our school data and adjust the plan accordingly as needed. Last Friday, we closed Jennings County Middle School until September 7 due to the large numbers of students identified as close contacts. As our number of students with COVID have increased to 61 as of today and more than 600 students have been identified as close contacts bringing 26% of our students in JCSC impacted by COVID, it is clear we must do something different to keep all of our students in school and avoid having another school or the district shut down and move to virtual instruction.

After speaking to health care officials yesterday, we have determined that requiring masks for all students and staff beginning Monday, August 30, regardless of vaccination status, will enable us to keep more students in school safely. By wearing masks, students are not identified as close contacts if they are farther than 3 feet away from one another, which we will be able to maintain in most classroom and school situations. While the level of protection from the mask varies depending on the type a person wears, we do know from scientific evidence that mask wearing does provide a greater level of protection and most certainly will allow us to identify far fewer close contacts. Ultimately, this will allow us to keep our students in school learning with their teachers since far fewer will be sent home.

We understand that no one wants to wear a mask. We also understand that for some this has become a political issue. For JCSC, this is not a political issue. It is a safety issue. It is our job to protect our students and staff and provide our students with a quality education. To do that, we need our kids in school. We must be willing to do whatever it takes to achieve that goal.

We will reevaluate our COVID data in the middle of October and if our absences are below 10%, we will discuss relaxing the mask requirement and making it optional. We will use data to make our decisions. According to our health care officials, the rise in COVID cases is expected to peak in 5-6 weeks. We hope to see our numbers decline following that peak.

Thank you for all you do to support our schools and staff. We are still navigating a pandemic and must continue to work together and look out for one another. We will continue to keep you informed as decisions are made to protect our most vulnerable members of this community—our children.

Sincerely,  
Teresa A. Brown, Superintendent

**Stronger Together**