



Southwestern Superintendent Releases Specific Changes After Judge Issues COVID-19 Mitigation Ruling

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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BRIGHTON - Southwestern School District Superintendent Kyle M. Hacke announced this week the district has immediately altered the mandated COVID-19 mitigation efforts that specifically require face coverings for students and staff, along with some other items.

These are full details of what the superintendent said:

"Dear Friends of the Southwestern School District, The Southwestern School District, as well as numerous other districts in the state of Illinois, was named as a defendant in a lawsuit challenging the Governor's, Illinois Department of Public Health's (IDPH) and Illinois School Board of Education's (ISBE) ability to mandate COVID-19 mitigation efforts in schools, specifically requiring face coverings for students and staff, the exclusion of close contacts and the requirement of weekly testing for unvaccinated employees.

"Due to the court's decision entered upon Friday, January 4, 2022, the Southwestern School District will immediately alter the mandated COVID-19 mitigation efforts to honor the order. The following will begin on Monday, February 7, 2022:

- Face coverings will be optional for all students and staff while at school, except on school buses where they will remain mandatory.
- All forms of district transportation are governed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) requirement of face coverings on all forms of public transportation under which school buses fall.
- The testing of unvaccinated staff will be optional.
- Students and staff will no longer be excluded from school for "close contact". Please monitor your child's health closely and keep any child home that is ill or experiencing symptoms.

"There are still many questions left to answer regarding this ruling and what it means to the procedures at school. Keep in mind, the order issued by the Judge is a temporary restraining order and is being appealed by the state to the appellate court and we will be required to reassess if the ruling is stayed or reversed, which can happen at any time. We will be in communication if changes are required.

"We ask for your patience and understanding as we work through this process. I know this is a very challenging and stressful time for all. Our goal continues to be to provide in-person learning each and every minute we can for our students this year. So far, we have been very successful due to our staff's unwavering resolve to make that happen and the cooperation and support from our students, parents and surrounding community. Like all challenges we face, we will get through this together."