



Edwardsville School District 7 Makes Decision For Mask Optional, But Recommended For Students/Staff

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville School District 7 Superintendent Dr. Patrick Shelton released information today that after working with legal counsel, the 9-0 Joint Committee on Administrative Rules vote of 9-0 means because these emergency rules

have expired, schools can only require employee vaccinations/testing, student and employee masking, and exclusion of students and employees (positive or close contacts) from school if there is a court order or an order from the local health department.

"Earlier today, we learned of an action from the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) which voted 9-0 to reject a reintroduction of emergency rules for COVID-19 protocols in schools which include masking, testing, and exclusion. JCAR is not connected to the Illinois Appellate Court process, which we are still awaiting a ruling from," he said on Tuesday. "As a district, we have a duty to be compliant with all state and federal mandates and follow the guidance of health care professionals locally, regionally, and nationally.

"As a result, beginning Wednesday, February 16, 2022, District #7 will recommend masks for all students and staff in our schools. This also applies to Kid Zone. Additionally, students who are currently excluded as close contacts may return to school tomorrow."

Dr. Shelton stressed please note that federal law still requires masks on buses. The committee vote does not change this, and so students who ride buses will still be required to wear masks.

Dr. Shelton added while the District recommends masks, we also remain vigilant about providing a safe environment for students and staff.

He explained District 7 families can expect that we will:

- Continue to implement several mitigating strategies in all our schools, including opportunities for vaccinations, social distancing to the greatest extent possible, district-wide testing, incorporating fresh air into the school environment, HEPA filtration systems in our larger cafeterias, and cleaning and sanitizing on a regular basis.
- Have KN95 masks available for any staff member who wishes to have one. We will also have KN95 masks available for our students that can be picked up in the school office.
- Recommend any symptomatic students and staff to remain at home.

"We understand that this is a shift in our mitigation strategies, and it will be met with differing responses from all stakeholders," he said. "District #7 expects each of our students and community members to treat each other with civility, understanding, and respect. As individuals, agreement is less important than seeking to understand others and the perspective that they hold related to any given situation. I would encourage each of our District #7 families to have a conversation with their child about respecting

others, including the way in which we each approach COVID. I appreciate those of you who have reached out to better understand, as we are better together as a school district and as a community.

"Ultimately, we all want the same thing – to provide in-person learning and opportunities for District #7 students to excel in their own individual talents.

"Thank you for your patience, understanding, and support as we continue to educate children in the District #7 community."