



October 20, 2021

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are well into the new school year, and as we near the end of October, I want to take an opportunity to update you on the landscape in SD#27.

Obviously, we were all hoping to be looking at COVID-19 in the rear-view mirror by now and that has not happened. It has been refreshing to see kids return to sport and other community activities that are a significant part of their family life. As a school district, it has been refreshing to meet face to face with people, gather and learn together. However, at the forefront of these interactions, we also see the beliefs and reactions of members across our community as they pertain to the use of masks in school or in general, and with regards to vaccinations and vaccine passports. The unique situations of families, their lived experiences and a multitude of other factors contribute to each individual's mindset.

Our support staff, teachers and administration have been working hard to manage this range of reaction and emotion they encounter in schools, while also having to manage their own levels of comfort or anxiety. It isn't perfect, but everybody is trying very hard, in very trying circumstances. Neither our support staff, teachers nor administration have created the conditions we are in, nor have they developed the health guidelines. Similarly, the Board has not created this, and it is challenging for everybody. We are all following the prescribed guidelines as best we can.



I ask that you please be mindful that our staff is under much of the same pressures and stressors as others in our communities, while also being at the receiving end of frustrations for which they are not responsible. Yes, masks have now been mandated from k-12. Yes, there are exemptions. As a result, schools have a very difficult role to navigate when parents feel frustrated that their child is being "forced" to wear a mask (they are not) at the same time other parents feel frustrated we are not "forcing all kids to wear masks" (we cannot).

I want to thank our staff for their ongoing efforts over 20 difficult months, and I want to thank you, our parents, and guardians, for your continued patience in these trying times. I especially want to thank the students, who continue to be remarkably adaptable and understanding. Continued patience and understanding will help us to get beyond this pandemic. Once we do, we can be proud of our response and of the example we have set for children in the way we have treated each other throughout this period.

Yours truly,

Chris van der Mark  
Superintendent of Schools

***"Learning, Growing and Belonging Together"***