

Lisbon School <lcsd@lisbon.k12.ia.us>
To: lionspride@lisbon.k12.ia.us

Tue, May 18, 2021 at 12:12 PM

May 18, 2021

Dear Parents and Students,

The Iowa Department of Public Health and the Governor's office announced late Friday afternoon that Iowa schools transition to optional wearing of face masks/face coverings for students and staff.

The Lisbon Board of Directors met Tuesday at 12:00 pm and beginning Tuesday, May 18, 2021, at 4:00 pm, Lisbon Community School District will no longer require face masks/face coverings while at school or during school activities. Face masks and face coverings are optional. Parents will determine if they want their child to wear a face mask.

The Iowa Department of Public Health will now treat COVID-19 cases like other [child illnesses](#) and requires schools to follow protocols. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the child will be excluded and sent home. Communication will be sent to parents of students who were exposed. However, schools are no longer required to quarantine exposed students. It will be up to parents to decide if they elect to keep their student home if exposed to a positive case of COVID-19 and to determine if any health risks exist. IDPH clearly states that mask wearing should be a parent's choice.

Our school buildings will operate as normal. Parents and visitors are expected to check in at the office. We do ask all parents and visitors to refrain from visiting the school buildings or activities if you have COVID-19 symptoms.

We are not opening our buildings for parents or visitors during student lunch hours as this is a very busy time for us with only 8 days remaining in the school year. We thank you in advance for helping to keep our staff and students safe and healthy.

Please see the attached statement on behalf of the Lisbon School Board. If you have any questions, please contact your school administrator or any school board member.

Thank you and we look forward to finishing this school year strong!

Pat Hocking
Superintendent
Lisbon Community School District

May 18, 2021

Parents, Students, Staff and Community Members,

The inconsistent guidance that has been received from federal, state, and local government officials has once again put the Board in an impossible position. The CDC has changed their mask guidance to remove the recommendation for wearing masks indoors only with respect to vaccinated individuals. Since, by definition, most of our students, including our middle school and elementary students, are not old enough to be vaccinated, following CDC guidance would suggest that we continue with our policy of requiring masks indoors through the end of the school year. However, the guidance issued by the Iowa Department of Public Health is directly at odds with the CDC in suggesting that the requirement for masks indoors can be lifted in its entirety, without regard to vaccination status. Local officials such as the School Board are therefore left to interpret this inconsistent guidance based on what we think is best for our students specifically.

We do not believe that any member of our community truly understands the pressure, cruel words, and even threats that the administration and Board members have faced as a result of being put in this position repeatedly throughout this year and it saddens us that it continues even now, just 9 short days before we end our 2020-2021 school year. Nonetheless, that is where we are, stuck between inconsistent guidance from government officials, and parents, most of whom have very valid concerns and arguments on both sides of the mask debate, and a few of whom have chosen to take their disagreement beyond polite discourse to aggressive and threatening behavior.

Considering that the Board has elected to follow the guidance of the Iowa Department of Public Health throughout this school year, even when that guidance is inconsistent with what other state and local public health authorities have been saying, we believe we must continue to follow IDHP guidance at this point. The research suggests that school populations as a whole have a very low rate of transmission, that children (by in large) do not suffer from the harshest symptoms of COVID-19, and that there are now new treatments and ample access and capacity in the healthcare system to accommodate COVID-19 infected individuals.

In short, things have gotten better. They are certainly not perfect, but they are better. It appears that COVID-19 is something that we are going to have to learn to live with going forward. While we think that now is an awful time to change course given where we are in the school year, we feel we must be consistent and continue to follow IDHP guidelines. Regardless of the decision, we also believe that we need to be very clear with all students and staff that we need to support those people who continue to choose to wear masks and have a zero tolerance policy for bullying, teasing, etc. of any type related to those that choose to wear masks as well as those who choose not to wear masks. The IDPH is very clear in their guidance that this is now a "Parent Choice" on masks. We ask that you please exercise that right and that you please respect the varying opinions of others regarding masks during this challenging time.

Yours in Service,

Dave Prasil, School Board President

Jen Caspers, School Board Vice-President

Allan Mallie, Board Member

John Prasil, Board Member

Abbe Stensland, Board Member

Pat Hocking, Superintendent