

Des Moines Public Schools Will Reinstate Mask Mandate

NOTE: following the press release is a letter sent by Superintendent Ahart to all DMPS families on Tuesday, September 14 providing additional information on the mask requirements in effect at DMPS.

In light of the U.S. District Court's order issued today, granting a temporary restraining order against the Iowa law banning face mask mandates in schools, Des Moines Public Schools will reinstate a mask mandate in order to comply with federal law as well as mitigate the on-going spread of COVID-19.

The mask mandate will go into effect on Wednesday, September 15. Additional information will be provided to the families of students and school district staff tomorrow.

The following is a statement from Dr. Thomas Ahart, Superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools:

"The court's decision to set aside Iowa's ban on school districts being able to protect children in our care is welcome news. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge in Iowa, our families and staff have expressed their concerns about schools not being able to require minimal, effective mitigation steps, such as wearing a mask, in order to keep people healthy and safe. With today's ruling, as Superintendent I will reinstate a mask mandate – as we had in place for most of last school year – for all students, staff and visitors to Des Moines Public Schools."

[Click here to download a PDF of the Court's order.](#)

Dear DMPS Families:

Starting tomorrow morning, Des Moines Public Schools will require that face masks must be worn by all students, staff and visitors to our school district buildings. This is being done for three important reasons:

1. A U.S. District Court has placed a temporary restraining order on Iowa's law that prevented school districts from requiring masks, citing that it violates the rights of students who are susceptible to the COVID-19 virus, and DMPS will comply with federal law;
2. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control strongly recommends face masks be worn in schools, regardless of a person's vaccination status, and so this requirement aligns with the advice of the nation's public health experts; and
3. Face masks are more important today than they were a year ago as the Delta variant of COVID-19 is having a much greater impact on children.

Most importantly, this is being done to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of our students, staff, their families and the entire Des Moines community. Wearing a face mask is a proven and basic step to help meet that goal.

This requirement goes into effect with the start of school tomorrow (Wednesday, September 15), and is similar to the requirement that was in place for much of last school year. We want to provide a few reminders for families to make sure everyone is aware and complies with the need to wear face masks in school. Those reminders include:

- Students should provide their own face mask. However, if a student loses or forgets their mask, schools will have disposable face masks available.
- The mask requirement will apply to people attending indoor activities and athletics, such as volleyball games or swim meets; face masks are not required but are encouraged at events held outside, such as football games or outdoor recess.
- Families claiming a medical exemption from mask wearing will need to contact the nurse at their child's school and provide medical documentation.
- If students refuse to wear a mask it will be treated as a misbehavior and parents/guardians will be contacted. Depending upon the student's age, they will need to either be picked up by a parent/guardian or sent home.
- Parents should be aware that online learning options are limited at this time: Virtual Campus, serving secondary grades, is at capacity; there are some openings still available in Edgenuity for elementary school students.

All of us are desperate to get back to "normal" and celebrate a day when the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us once and for all. Unfortunately, as the Delta variant continues to spread and children under 12 years old are not yet eligible to be vaccinated, that day has not arrived.

Until then, Des Moines Public Schools will do everything we can to protect the health and well-being of our students, our staff ... and you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Ahart Superintendent Des Moines Public Schools

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