



SPARTA AREA SCHOOLS

465 South Union Street, Sparta, MI 49345
Peter W. Bush, Superintendent

Administration Offices

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August 18, 2021

Dear Spartan Parents & Families:

The start of the 2021-22 school year is upon us!! Our district will be holding open houses in all our buildings tomorrow, August 19, starting at 4:00 p.m. Students entering all grades K-12, as well as our ECSE students in our new Early Childhood Center, will be starting school next week on Tuesday, August 24. I wanted to share some important updates and information as we all prepare for our return to school.

Currently there are two public health orders that our district is required to follow. The first is the federal mandate that all staff and students wear a mask on public transportation (including school buses). All students are required to have a face covering to get on a bus. Our drivers will have disposable masks available, but we do ask that parents try to provide your child with an appropriate fitting mask each day that they are going to ride a school bus. Students must keep their mask on and wear it appropriately while on the bus. We appreciate your cooperation at reinforcing this with your child if they are going to ride the bus to and from school!!

Secondly, the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) has issued a public health order for schools to report any positive cases of COVID, post the information on our website, contact trace any close contacts to a positive case and notify parents of that close contact, and enforce any quarantine requirements imposed by the health department. Our district will be following this order and will continue to provide communication to you on the status in our district, much like we did last school year.

Additionally, there are several recommendations from the CDC, MDHHS, and the KCHD to keep our staff and students safe. Below is a summary of how we are planning to begin the 2021-22 school year based on these recommendations:

- Facial coverings (masks) for all staff and students while indoors at school is recommended. This is a recommendation and not a mandate. That does mean that staff and students can choose whether they will wear a mask at school while indoors. We all must respect and support those that choose to wear one as much as those that do not.
- We ask all parents to screen your children each morning before reporting to school. If they are not feeling well or demonstrate any symptoms of COVID, please DO NOT SEND THEM TO SCHOOL!! Please contact the school office to report an absence and any symptoms we may need to be aware of.
- COVID vaccinations will continue to be a personal choice. No staff or student will be required to receive a COVID vaccination to attend school. We will continue to share

information on any local vaccination clinics, should they become available, for those that may be interested.

- We will honor social distancing, and encourage it, as much as is feasible. Student desks will be placed at least 3 feet apart in the classroom. Students are naturally cohorted by class at the elementary level, and we will continue with our alternating block schedules at the middle and high school to limit the number of transitions throughout the school day. When students are eating lunch in the cafeteria they will be required to sit with their class to limit their exposure and number of close contacts.
- We will continue to encourage hand-washing, the use of sanitizer, respiratory etiquette, and the cleaning/disinfecting of the classroom and high-touch surfaces. Our custodial staff will clean all common areas and high-touch surfaces throughout the day and at night to keep things as clean as possible.
- At this time all volunteers will be required to wear a mask when in our schools. No staff member is required to allow/use volunteers, but if they do, we will ask them to make sure volunteers abide by this request. We will revisit this on a regular basis as the school year moves on.

As we prepare for Open House on Thursday night, and the first day of school next week, we ask that everyone please honor and respect each other. There will be staff members, parents and students wearing masks and trying to maintain their social distance, while others may choose to not do so. While we expect lots of people at Open House, there should be plenty of space to spread out, so please do so to the best of your ability. We realize the challenge that lies ahead, but are confident that we can all do what needs to be done to respect and protect everyone.

Please also continue to share your questions or concerns with our school board members and our district leadership team. We will remain nimble in our approach to limiting the spread of COVID while in school and will make any necessary adjustments, should they be needed. Our Board of Education is committed to keeping our staff and students safe while also providing some flexibility for parents to decide what is best for their child(ren).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter W. Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter W. Bush, Superintendent &
Sparta Area Schools Board of Education