

# USD 291 Grinnell Public Schools

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*Home of the Thunderhawks*

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Dear Parents and/or Guardians:

Recently, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment developed new guidance related to COVID-19 disease and contact tracing. At the time, it was announced that KDHE and county health officials would no longer be conducting contact tracing or provide information to schools regarding positive cases or potential exposures. Immediately following this announcement, school leaders became reaching out to KDHE to share their concerns. Their primary concerns were the need to reallocate resources and the lack of authority to issue isolation or quarantine orders. Due to the volume of feedback from schools across the state, KDHE came to realize the burden being placed on school officials because of the lack of resources and training to perform that duty.

As a result, on January 18 KDHE and KSDE announced revised guidance for K-12 schools. KDHE made their presentation to all 105 county health departments. At the same time KSDE was reviewing the new guidance with superintendents around the state. Effective on Tuesday, January 18, contact tracing by school officials is suspended for 30 days (through February 17). Below is a brief overview of the protocols that will be implemented at USD 291 because of this announcement:

- The primary responsibility for deciding who may or may not attend school shifts to the parents (as it would be for any other illness).
- Any individual who is ill should stay home. If a student begins displaying symptoms of an illness during the day, school officials will call and ask to a parent come get their child. We will not test for COVID unless requested by parents.
- Any individual with a confirmed case of COVID must stay home for at least 5 days. Beginning with day 6, the individual may return to school if they have no symptoms and are fever free for 24 hours. The individual is required to wear a well-fitting mask at all times during days 6 – 10.
- Individuals who have had a close contact with a high probability of exposure should stay at home for at least 5 days. Beginning with day 6 the individual may return to school if symptom and fever free. The individual must wear a well-fitting mask at all times during days 6 – 10.
- Local school officials will only provide notification of possible exposure if specific and detailed information is available. Otherwise, we ask parents to know and understand that anyone who has spent time in a public place recently is likely to have been exposed to the Omicron variant.
- Although our local schools do have test kits available, the testing policy recently adopted by the Board of Education is also suspended through February 17, 2022. We will only test students at parent request.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at 785-824-3296 or 785-824-3277.

Sincerely,



Gary A. Kraus – Superintendent of Schools

