

# Morgan County R-II School District

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*United for Tiger Excellence*

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Tiger Families,

Last week Governor Parson and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released some new guidance on mask wearing as it relates to determining close contacts to a positive COVID case. In summary, schools with a mask mandate can use this new guidance to eliminate the need for close contact quarantine in some instances where masks are worn appropriately and meet the approved mask criteria (they must have two layers, face shields do not count). We have provided a link to more details on our various social media platforms and we encourage you to read through that information where you will find answers to many of your questions.

Due to this new guidance from the state and DESE, the Morgan County R-II Board of Education approved a mask mandate at our regular board meeting last night. This mandate will be for PreK -12<sup>th</sup> grade and will look very similar to what we are doing now in Category 2. In the event that we moved back to Category 1, with less restrictions, the mandate may remain in place, depending on the situation at that time.

I believe it is important that we all understand that the role of the board of education in this instance was to simply decide to put a mask mandate in place or not. After a lengthy discussion and input from the public they unanimously approved the mask mandate and it begins today. From there, the responsibility to quarantine using the new guidance from the State of Missouri and DESE is still at the discretion of the Health Department with the cooperation and input from the school district. Our administrators and nurses, alongside the health department, do their best to look at all the facts in each case and safely determine who will and will not be quarantined. That process will be no different. The new recommendations only provide additional options to consider when making those determinations. I have advised our staff, when in doubt, to err on the side of caution and safety.

You will find many answers to your questions in the list of FAQ (attached and/or posted online) Please take some time to read through them. If you have additional questions do not hesitate to talk to your building leaders or contact me directly.

Sincerely,  
**L. Steve Barnes**