

Virus changes approved for Royal Valley

(KNZA)--The Royal Valley Board of Education this week made changes to the school district's quarantine and mask protocols as related to helping prevent the spread of COVID-19.

That's according to a message to district parents, as posted to the USD 337 website, by Superintendent Aaric Davis.

The message was posted Wednesday, one day following the Board of Education meeting that led to the approval of the low-risk exposure policy in grades PreK through 8th grades, "as allowed by the Jackson County Health Department."

Among the changes included in the policy are those related to the wearing of face masks by both students and staff, with masks needing to meet criteria defined by the health department. Mask protocol means only N95, KN95, hospital masks with elastic, a surgical mask with ties, or "other masks with two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric," may be worn. However, because many gaiters and bandanas are single ply, the school district will no longer allow them to be used as acceptable masks. In order to allow time for the change to be made, the district will not implement the change until January 19.

Among other changes made through approval of the low-risk exposure policy are those related to quarantine protocols. Effective now, PreK through 8th grade students identified as a low-risk exposure while at school will no longer be required to quarantine at home.

In the message, Davis said "the Board of Education made it very clear that this low-risk exposure policy could be removed at any time in the future if deemed necessary."

Davis explained that the number of students he observed failing during the past semester was "3 to 4 times greater than usual" in the district, adding that "a consistent learning environment is an essential component of student success, explaining that since the beginning of the year, the district has "quarantined a large number of students and have very little evidence that those quarantined students have gone on to contract" COVID-19.

Davis, toward the end of the message, said the Board of Education "would like to extend this [policy] later for the high school students to help keep them in school," adding that "the [high school] students are going to have to show an improvement in their ability to properly wear their mask during the school day and on the school bus" before such a change can be made for the high school grade levels.

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