

USD 415 Board votes to end mask mandate in schools

(KNZA)--The Hiawatha School Board voted Monday evening to end the mask mandate in district schools and instead make masks " highly recommended", effective at the end of the school day on Friday (April 16).

Following a lengthy discussion, Board member John Wright made the motion, which was approved on a 4-3 vote.

Joining Wright in voting yes were Board members Andrea Groth, Amy Kopp and Ian Schuetz. Voting against the motion were board members Jeff Brockhoff, Keith Erdley and Tom Simmer.

Board members in favor of the motion noted county cases are low and felt the health risk in district schools is low as well.

Board members against the motion expressed concern about finishing the school year strong without further quarantines. In addition, they were also in favor of keeping the mandate to help ensure spring sports and graduation would not be affected by the coronavirus.

The decision came after the board received an update from Brown County Health Officer Robin Downard and school nurse Whitney McCauley.

As of Monday, Downard said there were two active COVID-19 cases in Brown County, with no hospitalizations.

McCauley said the last case in the school district was two weeks ago when a staff member tested positive. She said its been "some time" since a student has tested positive.