

January 7, 2022

Dear GSD Community & Staff,

As of this week, COVID-19 cases in Washington County have reached an all-time high due to the pervasiveness of the Omicron variant. We understand how important it is to each of our families to have their students attending in-person classes. All schools are experiencing a shortage of substitute coverage; it is no different at GSD. In order to keep students in school, Gaston staff members have been doing an amazing job of stepping up to cover for unfilled absences. Everyday, in-person instruction still remains the highest priority of GSD.

The following information is a layered approach — adding one mitigation strategy on top of another — to ensure that students and staff remain healthy, and schools remain open. Some of these items are new protocols while others are reminders of important strategies to curb the spread of COVID-19 among our students and staff.

Changes to protocols will take effect on **Monday, January 10**.

#### **Assemblies & After-School Extracurricular Activities**

We are temporarily pausing all school assemblies; however, after-school clubs and extracurricular activities **will be allowed** with proper masking and social distancing.

#### **Athletics**

Athletics will continue with enhanced safety measures in place; however, families and students should be aware that participation comes with an inherent increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.

#### **Athletic Masking**

It's critical that all athletes and coaches consistently and properly wear masks when they're not *actively engaged* in the sport. For example, masks must be worn while sitting on the bench or in locker rooms. If a GSD team plays an away game in a district that requires athletes to be masked at all times, GSD players will follow that district's rules.

Failure to properly mask may result in exclusion from the activity.

#### **Spectators**

At this time GSD is not restricting spectators at athletic events; however, it is imperative that those attending games correctly wear a mask throughout their time on-campus.

Failure to adhere to masking and social distancing rules will result in removal from a game.

#### **Live Streaming**

When possible, schools will make every effort to provide live streaming of games and performances.

#### **Overnight Travel**

Any potential overnight travel will be paused at this time.

#### **Masking**

The indoor mask mandate in schools continues and includes *indoor* P.E. classes.

Please emphasize the importance of consistent and correct mask-wearing in addition to social distancing and frequent hand-washing with your students; free masks are available at school.

### **Visitors**

We are temporarily **pausing** all visitors. No visitors will be allowed beyond the front office, including guest speakers. After school parent meetings will be by appointment only.

If your child is sick or has been exposed to a positive COVID-19 case, please notify your school and remain at home in quarantine.

We'll continue to review and revise our safety protocols, as needed. As always, thank you for your cooperation and continued support.