



## MEMO: NOVEMBER 18, 2020 UPDATE

Dear Hornet Family,

The COVID-19 virus has negatively impacted many Hornet families, particularly in the past few weeks. Operating a school district during a global pandemic is difficult, but increasingly challenging when the virus has made it difficult to operate safely due to staffing shortages. Many districts in our region and across our state have been forced to close their doors in recent weeks. Unfortunately, we are in the same situation. We do not feel it is safe or even possible to continue in our present learning modes at the current transmission rate.

Following an emergency meeting with our advising team of parents, medical professionals, teachers, and leaders, we decided to adjust our learning modes. Beginning on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 through at least December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 all schools in our district will move to all remote at-home learning. If the number of cases decreases between now and December 7<sup>th</sup>, we may consider changing learning modes beginning the week of December 14<sup>th</sup>.

Similar to what many locations are experiencing throughout the United States, Sedgwick County, USD 262, and the communities we serve are experiencing the highest rates of COVID-19 since the pandemic began. With the Thanksgiving holiday right around the corner, the spread will likely accelerate versus level off or decrease. Doctors and nurses on the frontlines have shared their increased concerns due to a shortage of ICU hospital beds in our area. Additionally, the number of patients they are seeing is straining our area medical providers.

At the time of writing this memo, over 34 students and staff members are home fighting the virus. We have 213 students who cannot attend in-person learning opportunities/activities due to being impacted by COVID 19 (illness, awaiting test results, someone in their home is positive, or they have been determined to be a close contact with someone who is positive). There are 59 staff members in the same situation. This past week, due to staff absences and a shortage of substitute teachers, we've had to temporarily transfer paraeducators, building aides, nursing staff, custodians, food service workers, and principals to cover unfilled positions within our district. This is not sustainable for an extended timeframe.

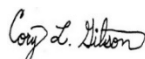
We all want to have our kids safe in school, and we recognize when school is not in session, it adds additional challenges for our families. As individuals and as a community, we all need to refocus our efforts and commitment in order to stabilize/decrease the transmission of COVID-19.

In order to reopen our doors, we need your help...please follow the same safety protocols in the community as our students and staff do while they are at school.

This includes:

- Wearing masks in public
- Social distancing
- Avoiding large gatherings
- Staying home when sick
- Hand sanitization
- Decreasing the number of exposures outside of the family unit (birthday parties, sleepovers, etc.)

It is essential that we all band together. We must slow the spread. I encourage you to join me and others in making these sacrifices because I believe it is worth it if it means our students can return to in-person learning and, most importantly, for the health and safety of all members and supporters of our Hornet Family. You will receive additional information from your child(ren)'s school(s) soon.



Proud Superintendent of Valley Center Schools

### Dr. Cory L. Gibson

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