

St. Maries Joint School District No. 41
P. O. Box 384 – 240 S. 11th Street
St. Maries, ID 83861
Telephone: 208 245-2579
Fax: 208 245-3970
Website: <http://www.sd41.org>



“Committed to Quality Education”

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The 2020-2021 school year is going to be a year of change. This school year will be like no other school year before. It is more important than ever before that we work together to make this year successful. If we do not work together, the COVID exposure rate will increase to a level that will require a soft closure of schools. I think we can all agree that closing schools is the worst case scenario.

To minimize exposure and keep our kids healthy, we will see a lot of changes in the next few weeks. We have been able to watch and learn from schools that have opened before us. However, as we get new information or work through some of our plans, we will discover that our plans may need to be modified. We ask that you have patience with us as we tackle the school year. Through communication and understanding, we can be successful. Some of those changes are outlined below.

MASKS/FACE SHIELDS: St. Maries School District highly encourages all students to wear a mask or face shield any time that they are unable to socially distance. School staff are expected to wear a mask or face shield. Face masks are mandatory for extra-curricular students and staff while at practice (except during exertion) and at all times on the bus.

KEEP SICK CHILDREN AT HOME: It is important that you keep your child/children at home when they are not feeling well. It is inconvenient to miss work when your child is ill, but missing weeks of work/school due to quarantines or a school closure would be even worse. This is likely the number one way that parents and guardians can help keep our community healthy.

IDAHO DIGITAL LEARNING ACADEMY (IDLA): If your child is attending school using the IDLA route, we ask that you complete the online verification forms. Students using the IDLA route are still students of St. Maries Joint School District, and we therefore must have the associated paperwork completed.

BLENDED LEARNING: The Blended Learning option was designed to be a short term and flexible solution for children who are unable to be at school. The lessons for each class will be delivered in a Google Classroom platform. If your child is unable to attend school and planning to use the Blended Learning option, we ask that you notify your child’s school daily. It is important to understand that the Blended Learning option is intended to be short term and flexible.

CLASSROOM, BREAKFAST AND LUNCH VISITORS: Reducing the risk of transmission means reducing the number of people that come into contact with our children. Staff assignments, transition times, and seating assignments have all been developed to reduce the exposure. It is important to reduce the risk of a visitor exposing our children as well. Therefore, visitors will not be allowed into the buildings. If

you need to see your child during the school day, your child will be called to the office to meet with you. With a shortened day and a shortened week we must hold every moment as precious. Please try to avoid interrupting your child's day.

CLASS SIZES AND LOADS: We have made every effort to reduce the size of classes at each of the schools. We have reduced electives, developed video conferencing classes, and changed work schedules to make classes as small as possible. We will continue to look for ways to safely reduce class groups while still providing a quality education. There is no way of knowing exact class sizes until everyone has registered.

SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM: When schools closed last spring, the Federal Government gave Districts an avenue to provide a free breakfast and lunch to every child from one to eighteen (Seamless Summer). The Seamless Summer program has been extended through December 2020 or as long as funds are available. A Free Breakfast and Free Lunch will be available to all students at school Monday through Thursday each week. Because the program is only available through December of 2020 or as long as funds are available, we ask that all parents complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Application portion of the school verification/registration online. The results of the application will not impact your child's ability to get Free Breakfast and Lunch at school daily through December 2020 or as long as funds are available. The application is available online through Skyward Parent Access. To access the forms that are available, you must click the + sign next to your child's name. The Free and Reduced Application is under the Food Service tab.

TRANSPORTATION: There is no way that we can socially distance on a school bus. We have asked students to sit in family groups, have assigned seats, and have slightly modified some of our bus routes to reduce the chances of exposure. Because of the inability to socially distance, it is highly encouraged that all students who ride a bus wear a mask while on the bus.

STUDENT WELLNESS CHECK: We ask that you complete a wellness check with your child/children daily before they leave for school. A copy of the wellness check is attached to this email. If you are unable to complete a daily wellness check with your child/children, one of our staff members will complete that wellness check prior to allowing your child/children into the classrooms. If your child is not well, you will be asked to pick up your child from school. Again, if you are unable to complete the wellness checks daily, school staff will complete the wellness checks prior to your child/children entering a classroom.

REFRIGERATORS/MICROWAVES: In order to reduce the risk of transmission and for the safety of the students, refrigerators and microwaves will not be available to students. If you are packing a sack lunch for your child/children, please be sure to pack food items that do not need to be refrigerated or heated.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH: Because we cannot accommodate a lunch schedule that uses the cafeterias, all students will eat breakfast and lunch in their classrooms. Breakfast and lunch will continue to be an opportunity for students to appropriately socialize. Breakfast and lunch time has been built into the schedules, separate from classroom learning time.

This is a year of change! Some changes are uncomfortable and may be frustrating to you. Please be assured that the intent of these changes is to keep kids safe and school in session. It is important that

we work as a team to make this happen for our community. St. Maries Joint School District is Committed to a Quality Education. We ask for your assistance in reaching our goals.

Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Alica M. Holthaus

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