



# BOARD MEETING RECAP

## **Stop the Spread of COVID-19**

It is critical for all community members to personally adhere to mitigation strategies. These include:

- Wearing a mask
- Social distancing
- Washing your hands
- Staying home when you are sick

It is also important that prior to coming to school each day, families monitor students for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

[Please review the Daily COVID-19 assessment here.](#)

We request that all SMSD families cooperate with contact tracing by the district and the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment. As a reminder, we will provide a minimum 14-day notice when moving from one mode of instruction to another, except in situations requiring immediate action.

## **Recap**

The Shawnee Mission Board of Education held a special meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 for a dialogue with staff from the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) regarding application of gating criteria.

Superintendent Dr. Mike Fulton welcomed guests to the meeting and shared how everything SMSD does moving forward continues to be focused on the district's [mission](#) and core objectives.

[The full presentation can be viewed here.](#) The dialogue included the following updates.

**JCDHE Update:** Elizabeth Holzschuh, director of epidemiology, JCDHE, provided context for the development of school gating criteria. She shared that since schools have opened in Johnson County, there has been minimal transmission of COVID-19 in schools. She also provided an update on the rapid increase in positive COVID-19 cases in the greater community, resulting in consequences such as reduced hospital capacity.

“What we are recommending is that schools continue to move forward as much as they can, given their current capacity and that may mean that remote has to happen or we may need to quarantine a classroom if we start seeing concerning signs,” Holzschuh noted. “At this point JCDHE is not recommending going remote for all school levels.”

**Data Dashboard:** Dr. Christy Ziegler, chief of student services, provided an update on the district [Data Dashboard](#), including active isolation, active quarantine, and grade level impacts of active isolations and quarantines, as reported on Monday, November 9, 2020.

A deeper dive into the data noted:

- 1.7 % of the SMSD student population attending in-person instruction during the week of Nov. 2-8, 2020 in SMSD tested positive for COVID-19.
- 9% percent of students tested in a 2-week period in the SMSD tested positive.
- 14.3% of those tested in a 2-week period in Johnson County tested positive.

**SMSD Staffing Update** Dr. Michael Schumacher, interim associate superintendent of human resources, spoke on the current impact the pandemic is having on staffing. He shared details about an increased number of resignations, retirements, staff taking leave, and staff in isolation and quarantine. He also shared that the number of substitutes is dwindling. While there are multiple steps being taken to fill vacant positions, there are concerns about the ability to continue to staff schools with the current trajectory.

**SMSD Health Services Update** Shelby Rebeck, health services director, provided considerations for moving to remote-only learning.

- Individual quarantine takes place when a student/staff member has contact with a positive case of COVID-19.

- Classroom Quarantine occurs when contact tracing determines it is necessary, due to the level of exposures.
- Classrooms and/or schools would move to remote only if infection rates/isolation of COVID-like illness (includes flu-like symptoms) approach 10% in classroom(s) and/or school(s) The district will work with JCDHE to determine the need to move to remote learning
- Remote learning might be necessary if the district struggles to have sufficient staff available to keep schools open, due to the number of staff in isolation/quarantine, and the inability to provide sufficient substitutes.

Rebeck noted that personal responsibility is critical. In order for contact tracing to work effectively, the district relies on three components: the county health department contact tracing, SMSD contact tracing, and family cooperation. She compared each component to a three-legged stool. If one component is removed due to being overwhelmed by positive cases or lack of cooperation, the stool falls over.

**Johnson County Mental Health Center**, Susan Rome, Johnson County Mental Health Center deputy director, said they are seeing increased rates of mental health contacts in adults and kids, and an increase in the use of crisis services (up by 35%). Rome stated that the death by suicide rate in Johnson County is the same as it was a year ago. She acknowledged there is concern about the trajectory as the pandemic continues, and that the department receives many questions about mental health risks. Rome quoted the department director as saying “Mental health should not be a reason to not follow public health guidance, it’s just one piece of the picture.”

Rome also provided some suggestions for reducing stress to the extent possible and taking steps to mitigate mental health risks.

Two resources available to the SMSD community were mentioned during the meeting dialogue:

- Support is available to SMSD staff members through [New Directions, the Employee Assistance program](#).
- Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis or those supporting someone in crisis are encouraged to call the Johnson County Mental Health 24/7 crisis line at 913-268-0156.

**Application of Health Recommendations** The Board of Education approved an authorization for the Superintendent to follow all COVID-19 related recommendations from the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) regarding operations of the school district, including in-person instruction, even if JCDHE does not take steps to mandate or enforce their recommendations. This authorization does not limit the Superintendent from operating the district in a capacity that is more restrictive than recommendations by JCDHE, including determining the mode of instruction at the classroom, school or district levels should local conditions require (e.g. isolation/quarantine, student attendance, staffing shortage, etc).

This motion states SMSD, under the authority of the Superintendent, will follow JCDHE recommendations regarding academics, including in-person instruction, except where deemed necessary to be more restrictive.

The Board also approved an authorization for the Superintendent to follow all COVID-19 related recommendations from the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment regarding the operation of activities and athletics even if JCDHE does not take steps to mandate or enforce their recommendations This authorization does not limit the Superintendent from operating the district in a capacity of that is more or less restrictive than recommendations by JCDHE.

This would give the superintendent latitude regarding athletics and activities to be more or less restrictive depending on the superintendent's determination.

This publication, provided after each Shawnee Mission Board of Education meeting, provides a recap of some actions taken by the Shawnee Mission Board of Education and information about activities happening in the school district. An archive video of the workshop and regular meeting [can be found here](#). Links to board policies, agendas, and meeting minutes [can be found here](#).