

February 5, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As we come to the end of this snowy week, we have a few items for update:

Text messaging:

A few years ago, we began using text messaging as an additional way to communicate school delays and closings to parents/guardians. If you are not receiving texts and would like to, you must opt in to text messaging on your cell phone by texting Y to 67587.

Please note that our system allows us to text to cell phone numbers that are in our student database for parents/guardians and staff only. If your cell number is not in our student database, texting will not work for your phone. If you are receiving our autocalls, your number is in our database. You can also check for the number on your student's information on the Parent Portal (SchoolTool or <https://schooltool.horseheadsdistrict.com/sthhWeb/default.aspx>).

COVID-19 Testing:

As we reported last week, the state has removed the orange zone designation for our area, and therefore we are no longer required by the state to test students and staff in the six schools formerly in the orange zone. However, we plan to work with the county and continue testing in our schools (with the exception of Big Flats) to continue the best practice endorsed by the County Health Department as an additional level of safety for our community. Testing is also recommended for our in-season student-athletes as part of the state and county's approval of high-risk sports.

If your child is on hybrid instruction (and is not an athlete) in any of the six schools formerly in the orange zone and you no longer want your child tested, please contact your child's building principal via email.

Please be aware that if the state again designates our area to be in a micro-cluster zone of yellow or orange, we would be required once again to test students and staff in the identified schools. Your original consent submitted to the district would then still be in effect. If at that time you do not want your child tested, you would have the opportunity to change your child's format to 100% remote. Again, this would occur only if the state designates schools to be in a micro-cluster zone.

Budget Development:

The pandemic, now nearing a year, has led to a challenging time for budgets in our district, nation, state, and homes. Our Board of Education held its first budget workshop Thursday evening. The board will continue budget development at their next several meetings until their final adoption of the budget to be offered to voters May 18. Here is the budget development schedule:

- Thursday, February 25 (regular meeting)
- Thursday, March 4 (budget workshop)
- Thursday, March 18 (regular meeting)
- Thursday, April 15 (budget workshop)

continued

All meetings begin at 6pm and are live streamed (at <http://ideas.gstbores.org/hhds/>), recorded, and posted to the district website. As reported prior to the January meeting, public comment is allowed via zoom at the meeting's designated location. For more information on the process, schedule, and locations click here: [HCSD Board of Education](#).

The board must adopt the budget to be offered to voters at their April 21 meeting. A public hearing will be held at 6pm May 5, and the budget vote is Tuesday, May 18 from 7am to 9pm at the High School South Gym.

High Risk Sports:

As reported last week, the state and county have approved state-deemed "high risk" sports to return to action. Each district is required to have a plan to protect the safety of student athletes. Click here for the district's plan: [ReturntoPlayPlanHighRiskSports2.1.2021.pdf](#)

Please note that the county's approval of the return of interscholastic athletics includes the following requirements:

- Athletes must wear a mask at all times
- No spectators will be allowed for the first 14 days (county officials will review this guideline on or about February 15)
- Failure to follow all guidelines could result in revocation or suspension of play
- A three-strike rule will be put in place to ensure compliance among all districts participating in higher risk sport activities

Best Practices:

We are all relieved to see COVID-19 cases going down in our community and state. We must continue safety practices in order to keep the numbers down, even as more people are vaccinated. We want to keep going in the right direction so that we can one day return to a more normal school schedule. Please help by continuing to wear masks and keep at least six feet of distance from others when you must be out, avoid unnecessary outings, and wash hands often and thoroughly. Thank you.

If you have questions, please contact your school office.

Sincerely,



Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools

More Information:

[2020-21 District Plan](#)

[Itslearning](#)

[Safety Protocols](#)

[Social Emotional Support](#)

[Technology](#)