

Explanation

As strange as it may sound, education actually is the number two priority of Soper School. The number one priority is the health and safety of our students, teachers, staff, and community. Having said this, it is our belief that for the vast majority of students, distance learning is a terrible option. We now understand why virtual schools do not do well when compared to brick and mortar schools, why their graduation rates are so bad, and why students that come here from these schools are so far behind.

Many people may be quick to criticize how often Soper has chosen to go to the inferior teaching method associated with distance learning this year. Considering the difficulty, it has brought on the parents with concerns to childcare and students getting behind in their education. One has to ask is it worth it? Try to put yourself in the place of the administrators and school board for just a second. Your decision means that you are putting people at risk of contracting an infection that has caused worldwide health problems including death. Consider that a student can contract the virus at school and bring it home to people with underlying health conditions that may not survive. Consider the teachers and staff members at Soper with underlying health issues and who are care givers for at risk individuals. It is easy to say, "The school just needs to stay open no matter what" when you do not have to worry about that statement actually killing someone. It is also easy for the school to say, "Parents just need to find a way to make it work" when the school does not have to worry about who is going to watch and educate the kids while they make a living. The problems Covid-19 has created are far more complicated than just health.

With all this in mind, how do we proceed? There are some very good reasons to think that we could get back to normal by August and start the next school year without health concerns or virtual learning. However, this will be contingent on people trusting, and taking, the vaccines. But while we wait for this, is there a plan that bridges all concerns while providing a first-class education? The answer to that question is there is not one. I know, not what you wanted to hear. The school year is only halfway over. Do we want to continue the way we are going? Do we want students getting further behind? Do we want parents to miss work because they have no one to watch their kids? Of course not. We also do not want to put anyone's health at risk. Right now, we can't do both so we will just go back to school as usual. We will educate the kids to the best of our abilities and hope for the best. Hope that everyone makes it through this.

Just the Facts

School Schedule

- Starting January 4, 2021 school will be opened to **all** Soper students.
- 4th-12th students who can be successful with distance learning are encouraged to stay on this plan.
- The normal school calendar will be followed.
- Due to the large number of people who have chosen to stay virtual, the school will dismiss at 3:00 pm to allow teachers time to communicate with distance learners.

- The only way the school will shut down is if we are ordered by the state department or the number of employees infected/quarantined does not allow us to safely have school.
- School administrators and school board may determine to move to an A/B schedule or hybrid schedule to prevent a complete shutdown if staff infection rates become too high.

Isolate

- Health Department makes the decision on who is isolated or quarantined. Their decision will be enforced by the school.
- Isolation separates those who have been infected with the virus (tested positive) from others.
- Isolation period is a minimum of 10 days from the date symptoms started or, for those with no symptoms, from the date of a positive COVID-19 test. Those with symptoms may need to isolate for longer than 10 days.
- Symptomatic individuals should remain in isolation until 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication, and until other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.

Quarantine

- You may be quarantined by coming in contact within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes throughout a 24-hour period of someone who has tested positive.
- The quarantine lasts for 14-days.
- However, you may shorten this time to 10 days if no symptoms have been present and you agree to wear a mask while at school and in public for the remaining 4 days.
- The time can be shortened to 7 days if the individual has received a negative test and has not had symptoms during the quarantine period. Mask must also be worn when at school and in public for the remaining 7 days.

Masks

- Masks are highly encouraged at all times!
- Students are required to bring a mask with them to school daily!
- Teachers know their personal situations and may require students to wear mask while in their room.
- Masks will be worn during times when large numbers are gathered together such as in the hallways during break.
- Basically, if a staff member says to put on a mask, students are required to put it on.

Social Distancing

- To keep quarantine to a minimum, stay 6 ft apart as much as possible.
- Teachers are encouraged to stay 6 ft from students while teaching. Remember, we need staff members here to have school. We cannot do this if they are all quarantined.
- Teachers should also refrain from gathering. We all want to visit with each other but one infection has caused up to 90 people being quarantined at Soper.

Washing Hands

- Crazy that we have to say this but, WASH YOUR HANDS as often as you can.
- People tend to touch their face multiple times hourly. Simply washing your hands can reduce your chances of being infected.

Health Check

- Inspect your health before coming to school. Many people thought they had allergies only to discover they were positive with Covid-19.
- When in doubt, please stay home.
- Temperature checks will happen daily at the door.
- Students with a fever will be sent home.

I would like more information

Starting January 4, 2021, Soper School will be opening back up for in-person learning for all grades. However, if you can be successful with distance learning, it is requested that you stay at home. Smaller numbers provide the school with the ability to socially distance more effectively. Smaller numbers also decrease the opportunity for spread. The school also asks for parents and students to check their health status daily. If a child does not feel well, it is required that they stay home! Many people have thought they were just having a bad allergy day only to find out they have Covid-19. If anything is wrong regarding wellness, please do not come to school. We need to think about other people along with ourselves.

Masks (Apologies in advance for the following statements)

I remember when seat belt requirements became a law. I remember people saying things like we live in America, we shouldn't be told what to do. After the law saved millions of lives, people got used to it. I have heard the same kind of arguments about mask requirements. I have seen people defy these mandates at certain stores that tried to require them. Masks have become a political statement to some and a display of weakness. On the flip side, they are a safeguard and form of protection to others. The arguments go both ways.

Is it harder to wear a mask than not to? Yes. Therefore, by definition, does that not mean that wearing a mask takes a certain amount of strength and not weakness? Should we not look at the mask wearers as strong individuals who are able to do the hard thing? Do we not cover our mouths when we sneeze or cough? We should because it prevents the spread of germs. Have doctors and health care providers not wore mask for centuries because it helps with the spread of germs? Of course! So why do we now think that a face covering won't help at least a little? Even if all they do is make someone else feel safer, are they not worth it? We do live in America and we are supposed to be better than this. We are supposed to put others ahead of ourselves. Wearing a mask should be considered a sacrifice for the greater good.

With the above statements in mind, masks will be required in the hallway during class changes and at different locations. Teachers may also require students to wear masks in their classrooms. We have teachers that are caring for very high-risk individuals at home. We have teachers that are pregnant.

We have teachers with underlying health issues. If they want students to wear a mask in their classroom, students will wear a mask. If possibly saving a life is not a big enough reason to wear a mask, I have no idea what is. If you have a medical problem that limits you from wearing a mask, bring a note from your doctor. The school will call and verify. Doctors that I have spoken to say that people with health concerns need to be wearing a mask the most. They go on to say that if they can't wear a mask, they should probably stay home.

Isolate/Quarantine

If you are infected with the virus, you are required to separate away from others. This is isolation. Quarantine is if you have come in contact with someone who has tested positive. The Oklahoma State Department of Health has issued guidelines that govern how this is to be performed.

It is recommended that a 14-day quarantine is imposed to anyone who has come in contact with an infected person within 6 ft for 15 minutes. Although they hold to this recommendation, schools can opt to shorten this period to 10 days with no symptoms or even seven days if someone gets a negative test. To date, **at Soper**, no one who has been quarantined has actually become infected. We are deciding to go with the shortened policy and allow people to return to the school after 10 days without a test and 7 days with a negative test. This shortened time frame does come with stipulations. The person that comes back after 10 days must wear a face covering in public for the remaining 4 days. The same goes for people who tested negative after 7 days. If someone feels more secure to go the recommended 14 days, the school will honor this cautionary decision.

The school district does not determine who must quarantine or isolate. The school is required however to immediately notify the local health department of known positive cases and exposures in the school. The health department then instructs the school on how to proceed. This has happened several times in the past few months. At times, the number of staff members quarantined kept the school from staying open.

People have asked about the verbiage "recommendation." Questions like, "these are all just recommendations and not mandates right?" A lot of the times when I am reading updated regulations, I do see 'recommendations' which seems to imply that it is not mandated. However, this is misleading. The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), through its Commissioner, is charged with the duty to control the spread of communicable disease under law. This power and authority include imposing quarantine or isolation. The public health official at a county health department will determine the terms and conditions of the quarantine or isolation, not the school. If the health department places someone in quarantine or isolation, the school has no choice but to accept this decision and enforce it.

Distance Learning

If any student/family chooses to stay on distance learning for the Spring semester, Soper School will honor this request. However, students must show that they can be successful in this environment. If at any time a teacher or administrator determines a student is not being successful, the student will be required to return to in person learning or transfer to another district. Teachers and administrators will evaluate each case individually. We want to ensure that all students are learning and are gaining the best education possible. Signs of success include but are not limited to maintaining a grade of C or

higher in all classes, checking in daily, and communicating with teachers regularly. Signs of not being successful include but are not limited to earning a D or F in any course, not logging into Acellus daily, and not communicating with teachers regularly.