



July 13, 2020

Dear ESU-9 and parochial superintendents, principals, faculty, staff, and school boards:

As your local medical professionals, who care deeply about protecting the health of students and their teachers in our schools, we would like to express our united support for your efforts to open our schools safely to avoid the spread of the Coronavirus, COVID-19.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations in *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-Entry* (attached) indicate that masks and face coverings are high priority for students along with social distancing and hand hygiene. We agree with this recommendation and join the many other professional organizations who support these interventions for the health and safety of our children: Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians, Nebraska Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics, Nebraska Medical Association, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). With Coronavirus still active in our communities, we strongly support the following methods to prevent the spread of this disease and safely reopen schools:

1. **Mask wearing-** use of cloth masks or face coverings in all enclosed settings.
2. **Physical distancing-** A goal of at least 3-6 feet distance from others (about 2 arms' length).
3. **Hand washing-** Frequent hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer.

Scientific evidence clearly demonstrates the above recommendations will be critical to providing a safe return to school and reduce outbreaks that will threaten school or classroom closure. Mask usage is most effective when all persons wear them; choosing not to wear a mask endangers others by risking asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic spread of the virus. The use of masks interrupts virus transmission and has been effective in curbing the epidemic along with other social distancing measures. While we understand that there may be specific and limited school circumstances where continuous use of masks is not possible, masks are safe and have been successfully used with no additional health risks in a variety of settings including the pediatric population.

Thank you for your leadership and for your key roles in providing a safe environment for our children, their families, and the whole community, as we work together to navigate through these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

**The medical community in the South Heartland Health District**

Children and Adolescent Clinic, P.C  
Hastings Family Care  
Hastings Community Health Center  
Family Medical Center of Hastings  
Blue Hill Clinic  
Webster County Community Clinic  
Main Street Clinic - Red Cloud  
Superior Family Medical Center  
Nelson Family Medical Clinic  
Edgar Medical Clinic  
Quality Health Care Clinic, Sutton

Sutton Family Practice  
Memorial Health Clinic Harvard  
Memorial Health Clinic Clay Center  
Hastings Convenient Care, PC  
Pediatric Dental Specialists of Greater Nebraska  
Obstetricians & Gynecologists, P.C.  
Central Nebraska Infectious Disease  
Mary Lanning Healthcare Hospitalist Department  
Brodstone Memorial Hospital  
Webster County Community Hospital  
Mary Lanning Healthcare