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March 8, 2021

Dear HISD Family,

Last Thursday, the Texas Education Agency provided guidance to schools across Texas regarding Governor Abbott's new executive order and how that affects school operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenge all schools still face is to prevent, respond, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. TEA has stated that masks remain a requirement for schools but added "the governing body of a school system may modify or eliminate by formal action the mask-related requirements;" however, they did not lift the requirement of contact tracing. After careful consideration, Hondo ISD has decided to prioritize student, staff, and community health by following our state and local health agencies' guidance and keep our current COVID-19 safety measures in place.

While we still offer remote learning opportunities, we believe children learn best when they are on campus and want to ensure that our best effort is given to provide that opportunity by holding firm to our commitment to safety. Our COVID-19 policies and procedures have proven effective and played a significant role in allowing us to successfully keep our doors open for on-campus learning all year. Last spring, our students missed out on so many activities and experiences! We want to be sure we do everything within our power to prevent that from happening again. Since TEA has not lifted our contact tracing requirements, masks play a significant role in keeping our students and staff out of quarantine, thereby allowing them to remain in the classroom, participating in the activities they love. Without masking in place, many more students would be subject to quarantine situations.

We realize this is a very divisive issue and are carefully listening to and considering the concerns expressed by our students, faculty, and staff, as well as parents who have entrusted us with their children's safety and education. Our Leadership Team, along with the Board of Trustees, will continue to monitor the situation, review recommendations from the CDC as well as state and local public health authorities, and implement modifications to our policies when deemed appropriate.

Our hope is the 2021-2022 school year will not require these measures, and our students and staff will be able to return to a less restrictive environment. Until then, we ask that our students and staff remain committed to the health and well-being of all and continue to follow our COVID-19 protocols. We truly appreciate the continued grace, flexibility, and support our community and parents have offered us as we've navigated the challenges of this school year, and please, bear with us just a bit longer.

Sincerely,

A'Lann Truelock, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools