



Rockwood school district says mask decision coming next week

ST. LOUIS COUNTY, Mo– With the 2021-2022 school year just a matter of weeks away, parents are trying to find out if their children will have to wear a mask or not. The Rockwood School District said Friday that an announcement was days away.

The **Hazelwood School District** has already announced that the year would begin with a mask mandate, regardless of vaccination status.

Although a guarantee of 100 percent protection from COVID is not realistic, the school district said their “commitment to health [that their] learning community has demonstrated will greatly reduce the risk of exposure in HSD buildings,” [Hazelwood administrators said last week.](#)

O’Laughlin calls for new leadership at DESE amid critical race theory probe



JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Sen. [Cindy O’Laughlin](#), who chairs the Joint Committee on Education and has been holding meetings around the state on various [education](#) issues, is calling for new leadership at the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#).

In particular, O’Laughlin is critical of a [recent survey from the education department](#) (DESE) that said only Kansas City Public Schools said it approved curriculum containing so-called critical race theory out of more than 400 local education agencies (LEA) polled. O’Laughlin said the way the two questions were asked on the survey could lead to misleading results.

In addition to Kansas City Public Schools, [Hazelwood School District](#) and the School District of University City said they had curriculum covering the controversial New York Times’ 1619 project. For that question, 14 LEAs did not provide an answer, and 408 responded in the negative.

[Hazelwood](#) said the 1619 Project is used as a teacher resource for 4th-grade social studies regarding the arrival of enslaved people in Jamestown. Additionally, two paragraphs regarding the arrival of enslaved African people are given to students in an 8th-grade social studies class. It’s also used in a 9th-grade U.S. history class as a suggested learning activity from when former President Donald Trump discussed it and the [1776 Commission](#), the district said on its survey.

University City said the board did not approve the 1619 Project, but one teacher used it as a resource during a “unit of study with students.”

Critical Race Theory supporters shut out of state Education hearing

Heather Fleming, founder of Missouri Equity Education Partners, responded to Missouri's Joint Committee on Education's exclusion of testimonies during the invite-only hearing on Critical Race Theory in schools, "As an equity educator I was disappointed in the way that they misrepresented exactly what I do on a daily basis. What we do when we are teaching equity is we're teaching each other how to love one another better."



Over a 3 hour and 30 minute hearing last week, lawmakers from Missouri's Joint Committee on Education heard testimony regarding the teaching of critical race theory in schools. The testimony was invite-only, and aside from an official from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the only people who testified were opponents of critical race theory.

Kansas City Public Schools is the lone district in the state of Missouri that includes critical race theory in its curriculum. **Hazelwood Public Schools** and University City Public Schools reported that they teach the 1619 project, which frames the history of the country around the history of enslavement.

According to a DESE representative, there is nothing in Missouri's education standards saying that students in kindergarten through 12th grade are to be taught critical race theory, which is a framework of analysis of America's legal system exploring ways that race influences our laws and our history. It is most often taught in undergraduate and graduate-level courses in law and ethnic studies—and, generally speaking, not taught in primary or secondary education.

COMMUNITY NEWS

HSD teacher named a Missouri Regional Teacher of the Year

Dr. Kelly Taylor, a science teacher at Hazelwood West High School, has been selected as one of the awardees for Missouri Regional Teacher of the Year for the St. Louis region.

Taylor, who was also named Hazelwood School District (HSD) Teacher of the Year for the 2020-2021 school year, is among 10 teachers selected for this regional honor by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"I am beyond humbled to receive this honor and thankful to be selected to represent the amazing educators in the Hazelwood School District," Taylor said. "The passion, resilience, and perseverance of my students are what drives me to be a better educator."

Taylor, who has been with HSD since 2016, teaches Honors Biology, Principles of Biomedical Science, and AP Environmental Science, which is a dual enrollment course through University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL). Additionally, Taylor serves as a science instructor for UMSL's Bridge Program.

"Dr. Taylor is an outstanding educator and role model for both students and colleagues," said Dr. Nettie Collins-Hart, Superintendent of HSD. "Her commitment to our students is awe-inspiring, and we are so proud that her work is being recognized across the region."



Photo courtesy Hazelwood School District

Dr. Kelly Taylor, a science teacher at Hazelwood West High School, has been selected as one of the awardees for Missouri Regional Teacher of the Year for the St. Louis region.

The Arnold, Missouri native earned a bachelor's degree from UMSL and advanced degrees from Washington University and Maryville University.

From the Archives



1991 – 30 years ago

It's been 10 years since Farmington High School football coach Kyle Reid passed for more than 1,200 yards and helped Hazelwood Central to an 11-2 season record. In the early 80s, Central was considered a powerhouse in high school football, often ranked among the nation's best teams. Now, as he roams the practice field at Farmington, Reid has more on his mind than just quarterbacking an offense; he has an entire program to guide.

Long-range planning was the topic of the Farmington Chamber Commerce general membership meeting last Thursday afternoon at Plank Road Inn. Stuart "Mit" Landrum presented a description of long-range projects for the chamber to undertake. Landrum said in the past, one of the biggest problems incoming chamber presidents have faced is a lack of projects. The ones adopted by the chamber board cover a 10-year span.

Two Farmington girls' basketball teams participated in last weekend's Show-Me State Games held in Columbia. The Farmington Lynx, coached by Wayne Cox and Wendy Sebastian, and the Farmington Rippers, coached by Bob Webb and Rick Hanebutt, represented Farmington in the 11-12 age group. Members of the Lynx were: Erin Bohman, Megan Williams, Christy Unnerstall, Julie Ritter, Wendy Wilkerson, Michelle Boyer, Diedre Bingham, Joclyn Yates, Nicole LaPlant, Kristen Tripp, Krista Collins and Kara Cash. Members of the Rippers were: Erin Webb, Melanie Hoehn, Carrie Scroggins, Brandi Sebastian, Tanya Dotson, Michelle Pratte, Jayme Laut, Lindsey Freeman, Gretchen Hanebutt, Lisa Vierse, Courtney Pothetos and Erica Guiley.

Blottie Ussery of Ranken Jordan Pediatric Bridge Hospital



2021 Excellence in Healthcare Awardee

What are your current health care positions; and What are your responsibilities in this position?

I am a registered nurse at Ranken Jordan Pediatric Bridge Hospital. When I visited a hospital as a child, I knew then that I wanted to be a nurse and specifically work with children. I graduated from Florissant Valley Community College as a registered nurse in 1989. At the Bridge Hospital, the philosophy is to teach parents and to bridge the gap from a major hospital. The patients come from there to us to either learn about how to care for their children to get them home. I teach parents nursing care.

Do you have a previous position that helped you prepare for this work? If so, please share.

After graduating college, I joined St. Louis Children's Hospital as a staff nurse where I got the nursing foundation. There, I cared for kids with cystic fibrosis and asthma. It helped me to work effectively in a team. After a few years there, I wanted to care for kids with more severe medical conditions. I joined Strictly Pediatrics Specialty Center where I cared for medically fragile children in their homes, treating kids living with chronic illnesses. This population of children may live with a g-tube, central lines, ventilators, and other advanced living equipment. In addition to providing care to these children, I also served as a teacher to the parents and teachers of those children, showing them how to care for their kids and equipment. After nearly a decade at Strictly Pediatrics, I joined the **Hazelwood School District as a school nurse**. While I continued my career in pediatrics, I was eager to re-join a hospital environment where I could provide more advanced patient care. I joined Ranken Jordan Pediatric Bridge Hospital in 2006, a specialty hospital in St. Louis that cares just for children with medical complexities.

No. 30: Westminster's Minner learned the ropes quickly as youngest of five siblings



Larry Minner Sr. knew pretty quick the youngest of his five children would be cut out for sports.

Minner's two oldest sons, Armond and Dra, went to Eureka High. His third son, Ramone, went to **Hazelwood Central**. And daughter Adrianna attended Rosati-Kain and Westminster. They all played sports and helped toughen up their baby brother, Larry Jr. — or LJ, as he's known.

“It's a competition thing that I wouldn't say was sibling rivalries, but when you came to talk about sports, you had to come with it,” Larry Sr. said. “He's kind of seen the gambit. They just kept him on the right path. We let the siblings kind of do their thing because they have that connection and we would just stay out of the way. When they were younger, they didn't take it easy. So he had to adapt real quick.”

LJ Minner is thankful for what his siblings did for him.

MISSOURI INDEPENDENT

Kansas City only Missouri school district reporting it teaches ‘critical race theory’



A survey of over 400 Missouri school districts found only Kansas City Public Schools reported that it uses a curriculum that both teaches lessons about critical race theory and includes the 1619 Project.

Two other districts reported that they utilize the 1619 Project in their curriculum.

The results of the survey, administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), come a week after a handful of parents and teachers opposed to critical race theory [decried its teaching in schools](#) before a committee of lawmakers — even as the state’s commissioner of education said the academic concept is largely not taught throughout K-12 public schools in Missouri.

The survey was requested by state Sen. Karla Eslinger, R-Wasola, who did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday about the survey’s findings.

Over the course of two weeks from July 12-23, DESE asked school districts two questions: whether their board-approved curriculum includes lesson about critical race theory and whether it includes the [1619 Project by The New York Times](#), which detailed the United States’ legacy of slavery.

The [Hazelwood School District in Florissant](#) said it did not teach lessons about critical race theory, but that the 1619 Project is used in three classes.

In a 4th grade and 8th grade social studies class the series is a resource to help teach about the arrival of enslaved Africans in Jamestown, with students given a reading of two paragraphs in the 8th grade class.

In a 9th grade U.S. history course it’s mentioned in a suggested learning activity where former President Donald Trump discusses it and the 1776 Project, the district wrote.



Districts finalizing mask policies for fall after City, County reinstate mask mandate



ST. LOUIS (KMOV.com) -- With a new St. Louis City and County mask mandate in effect, some parents are wondering what this will mean for school districts that have not decided whether students will return to campuses this fall wearing masks. "I absolutely hate it, I think it's insane," said Amanda Kuelker.

Kuelker is a parent of three children at Parkway School District, but they will now be attending Rockwood School District in the fall. She is worried her kids may now have to wear a mask in the classroom and believes families should have the choice to decide what is best for their children.

"Everybody who wants the vaccine is having the opportunity to get one. Why do our children have to bear the burden of this over extension of control? It's not fair," she said. Both Parkway and Rockwood School Districts say despite the county mandate, they still have finalized plans for whether students and staff will be required to wear face masks when school starts.

That uncertainty bothers parents, like Kuelker. "That's where we're completely stuck and powerless because then my choice is, do I pull them out of school? What does that mean for me as a parent when I need to be working to support them?," she said.

County health officials say with the reinstated mask mandate, school districts should now ensure masks are worn by all students, staff and visitors while indoors, which also includes indoor summer camp activities. The health department will be working with districts to provide guidance on how indoor masking will look like.

While it's unclear how long the county mandate will last, some parents tell News 4 off-camera they hope school districts will enforce their own policies to protect students that still cannot get vaccinated from COVID-19. "I'm comfortable with kids wearing masks. I think it's going to be fine. They did it wonderfully in the spring, and I think that we can get through it," said parent Sarah Schoreder.

Schroeder's two children attend Walker Elementary within the Hazelwood School District. Last week, and prior to the county mandate, the district said it would require all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask on campus this fall.

While Schroeder is not as worried about her children getting sick from COVID-19, she supports the mitigation strategies **Hazelwood** has set so far.

https://www.kmov.com/news/districts-finalizing-mask-policies-for-fall-after-city-county-reinstate-mask-mandate/article_af86317e-ee61-11eb-9804-7371cedd7057.html

July 26, 2021



Districts, DESE share return to school plans as COVID-19 surge concerns grow



ST. LOUIS (KMOV.com) -- As the latest COVID-19 surge in Missouri continues to make its way into the St. Louis area, school districts are finalizing their plans for the fall semester.

This fall, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education says families should expect both school districts to offer the option for students to be in person or virtual, but the virtual option does not have to be offered by the school district. For districts that do not create their own option, students can pay to take the Missouri Course Access Program (MOCAP) offered by the state. Hybrid learning will not be an option.

"Currently, we don't have any statutory basis to require anything that looks like hybrid learning, as we had in the prior year," said Dr. Chris Neale, assistant commissioner for DESE.

Maplewood Richmond Heights School District and **Hazelwood School District** will also only be offering MOCAP as an option for students interested in virtual learning.

"The purpose of focusing in on in person school is really to serve the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students," said **Anthony Kieko, Director of Communications and Public Relations for Hazelwood School District**. "we know that they need that face to face interaction with teachers...and that's the best way for them to learn and the best way for them to interact as individuals so that's what we're focusing on."

Kieko says they are monitoring COVID-19 cases, however, to see if changes to the school year need to be made.

"We look at the numbers in the Hazelwood area, we look at the numbers in our buildings. We look at the feedback that we're getting from our parents and from our employees, and of course from our health services staff," said Kieko. "So that will be what will guide our decisions moving forward related to how school moves forward."



Hazelwood School District to start school year with mandatory mask requirement

ST. LOUIS – The Hazelwood School District said they will start the 2021-2022 school year in person next month with a mandatory mask requirement in place for all students and employees regardless of their vaccination status.

HSD said they have the “appropriate COVID-19 mitigation strategies in place” to conduct in-person learning.

Although a guarantee of 100 percent protection from COVID is not realistic, the school district said their “commitment to health [that their] learning community has demonstrated will greatly reduce the risk of exposure in HSD buildings.”

The district said they will continue to use their Help Hazelwood Get Healthy public health campaign to fight the spread of COVID. HSD said approximately 600 employees and 250 students have been fully vaccinated due to the campaign.

HSD is not offering hybrid or virtual learning come August. The school district pointed families who are interested in those options to the state-run [Missouri Course Access Program \(MOCAP\)](#).



Hazelwood School District to require masks for students, employees



HAZELWOOD, Mo. (KMOV.com) – Face masks will be required all for students and employees in the Hazelwood School District.

The 2021-2022 school year will begin in-person on August 23. The district said they will not offer a hybrid or virtual model as the school year begins; however, the state-run Missouri Course Access Program is a virtual school option families can pursue.

"I was incredibly nervous they were going to go back to virtual. My husband and I both work, so I didn't know how we were going to do it," said parent Amber Stegmann. "So to hear that they're going to go back full-time in person with masks, I'm happy."

The district will require masking for everyone regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status. The district said around 600 employees and 250 students have been fully vaccinated as part of the Help Hazelwood Get Healthy campaign.