

Kamiah Jt. School District No. 304

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Dr. Benjamin Merrill - Superintendent



Covid-19 Update for Kamiah School District Athletic Events

Hello parents, players, & fans,

I want to reach out and communicate some key information pertaining to athletics at Kamiah Schools. It is my hope that this will help answer any questions you may have regarding the requirements set forth by Governor Little's stage 2 order limiting spectator attendance. I also wanted to take a moment and explain the process in which we receive guidelines and how those guidelines are implemented into protocols at the building level. Lastly, I want to answer a few questions that I have received from parents and fans.

Before I begin, I want to thank the coaches, building administration, and players for your flexibility as we have faced an ever-changing situation and set of rules this season. I also want to thank the parents of our players for their patience as we work to implement safe practices that adhere to the Governor's rules.

Where are we now?

Currently, we are under Governor Little's Stage 2 order which limits spectators at all sporting events to 10 or fewer. This order was created on November 14, 2020. On December 10, 2020 the Idaho State Board of Education approved a resolution that directs all school districts to fully comply with the November 14th order of 10 or fewer spectators. Our building administration is working to ensure that up to 10 parents are admitted to each game. If we have more than 10 players, the building administration has been asked to create an equitable rotation of home events to ensure parents may watch their son/daughter compete. You will find links to the Stage 2 order and State Board of Education resolution attached at the end of this letter.

How did we get here?

Once we were notified of the November 14th order, Kamiah school board members worked with district administration to draft a protocol that met the spirit of the requirements set forth by executive order. Those guidelines were implemented to ensure safety of all students and spectators while balancing our mutual desire to have parents present at games. We were able to incorporate these guidelines safely for the first game of the season. Unfortunately, this approach was not taken across the state, and numerous districts ignored the order completely, or applied the guidelines haphazardly. As a result, the Idaho State Board of Education intervened and

unanimously passed a resolution on December 10th compelling all districts to comply with the spirit and letter of the Stage 2 order. That resolution placed a hard emphasis on 10 or fewer spectators. The State Board of Education resolution added that violation of the Stage 2 order may include penalties including criminal citation, loss of immunity status under the Coronavirus Limited Immunity Act for the district, and added that all certified staff including administrators could face a Code of Ethics violation with the Idaho Professional Standards Commission if they knowingly violate the order. This could result in revocation of the professional licenses of those staff members involved.

What about JV players?

I am frequently asked about the rule requiring JV players to be outside of the gym during the Varsity game, and vice versa. This restriction was not a part of our original plan, as we saw no distinction between players. Based on the fact that the players practice, travel, and dress in the same locker room, we allowed them to be in the gym and not count them as spectators. We later were notified that this practice was a violation, and students are considered spectators during the games they are not playing. I sought clarification directly from IHSAA Director Ty Jones, who confirmed that JV players will count against the 10 spectator list during a varsity game. Director Jones indicated that he confirmed this with the Governor's office directly. I am currently working with the coaches and building administration to find a solution so that players are supervised and safe, while also adhering to the spectator limit.

What about other schools?

The next most frequently asked question I receive is related to the protocols of other schools in our region. I have been asked why we are limiting attendance to games while other schools are not. In Idaho, school boards maintain local control in most matters. And prior to the Governor's stage 2 order, each district could set spectator protocols. Prior to the Governor's order, some districts were already limiting attendance. After the Governor's order, some districts chose to comply and others did not. However, once the State Board of Education passed the resolution, most have since complied fully due to the direct implications associated.

On a more personal level, I want our parents, fans, staff, and cheerleaders in the gym. However, I also believe that our district is doing the right thing by following the rules set forth by the Governor's order and State Board of Education resolution. I anticipate that a small number of districts may continue to ignore these rules, however, I can only focus on our district and ensure that we are meeting the rules set forth by the state. The possible consequences if we ignore these rules could impact us individually and our district as a whole.

What's next?

Currently, there is a movement by numerous state organizations including the Idaho School Boards Association, Idaho Association of School Administrators, Idaho State Board of Education, Idaho High School Athletics Association, and Governor's office to create a set of protocols that would allow schools to admit more spectators to games. The draft version of this protocol has been reviewed by the Governor's office but not yet approved for implementation. The draft includes provisions for increased attendance, social distancing requirements, cleaning protocols, and more. If this is approved, the Kamiah Joint School Board will be asked to adopt and sign the assurances for implementation. Although not perfect, it is a leap forward in getting parents back into gyms. I will continue to communicate with our trustees, coaches, administrators, players and parents if this option becomes available.

How can you help?

At times we may need volunteers to assist at games, or with JV supervision during the varsity game. If you are willing and able to help, please let our coaches or administration know. We will be looking for an adult to supervise JV players during the varsity game until changes are made regarding spectator rules. Approved supervisors will be provided a 2021-2022 athletic pass at no cost.

What if I have a question?

If you have a question regarding athletic spectator guidelines, please call me at the district office or email me at bmerrill@kamiah.org I hope that this communication was helpful and I will work to improve communication with parents, players, coaches, and fans as we navigate these next few months.

Good luck to our teams in 2021!

Best,

Ben Merrill

State Board of Education Resolution:

<https://boardofed.idaho.gov/resources/stage-2-stay-healthy-order/>

Governor Little Stage 2 Order:

<https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/stage-2-modified-order.pdf>