

Jackson County School District

Press Release – October 6, 2020

Superintendent: Dr. John D. Strycker

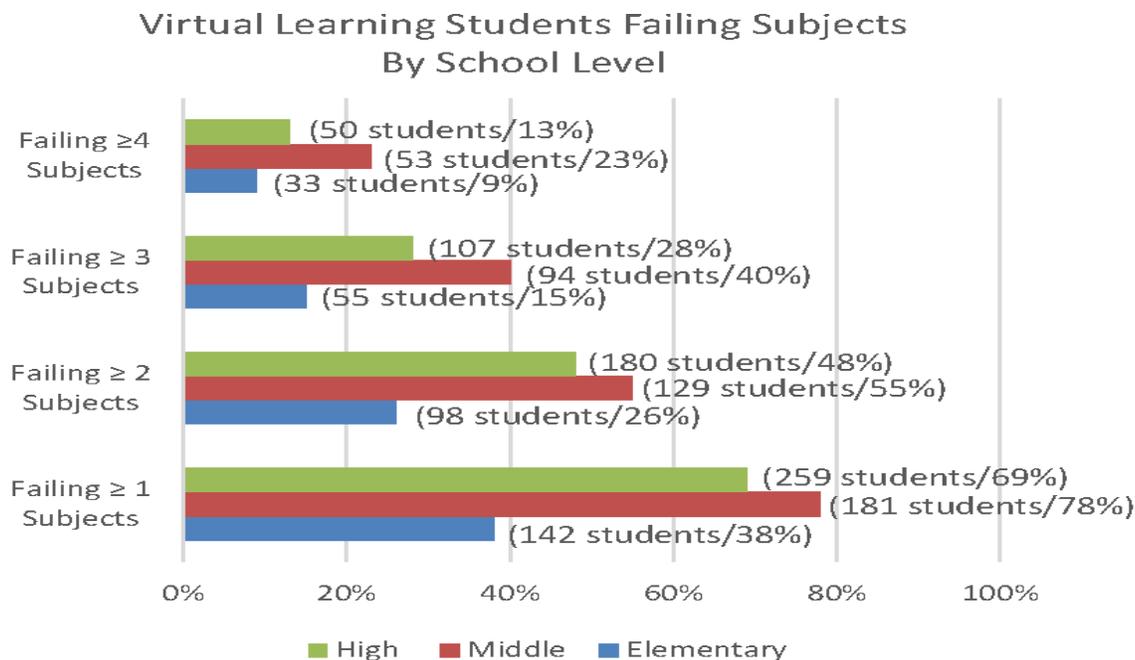


JCSD Board Votes for the Return of Virtual Students to School October 13, 2020

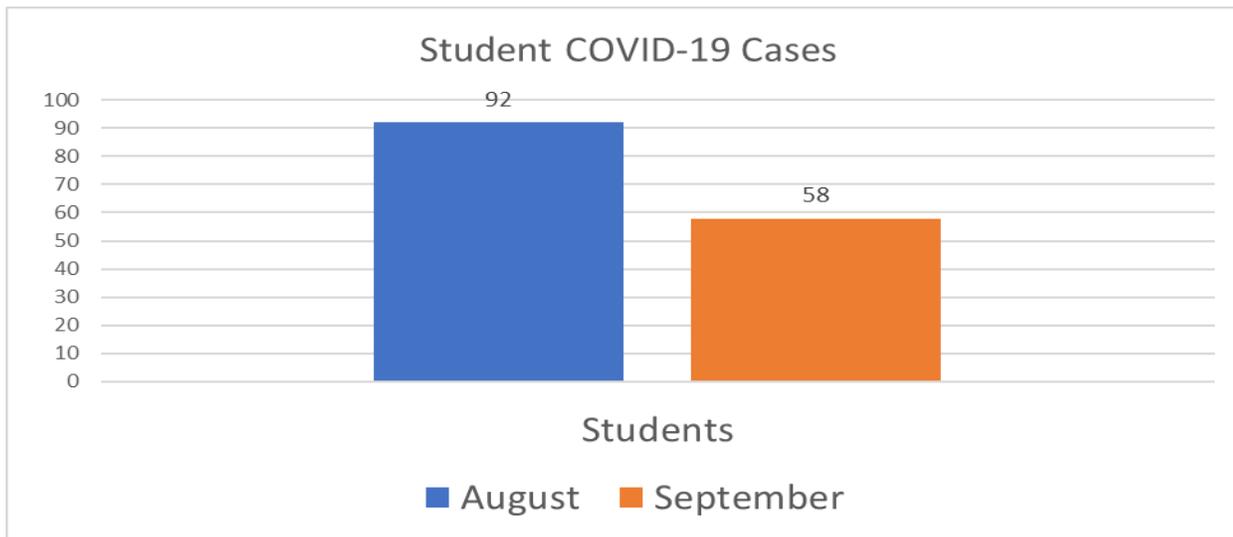
The Jackson County Board of Education’s October meeting took place last evening at St. Martin High School, following an all-day tour of the St. Martin Attendance Center. Highlighting the meeting was board action directing virtual students to return to campus at the beginning of the second nine weeks, October 13, 2020.

Dr. John Strycker, JCSD Superintendent, began the meeting by stating, “We have a serious crisis regarding the majority of our virtual students who are failing, and our teachers and school staff are burning out very quickly.”

Strycker referenced recent data regarding the number of virtual students who are failing coursework for the first nine weeks. He reviewed the chart below with the board members:



“This data is compelling evidence that our students need to be back in school,” Strycker continued. He noted that the district experienced a 37% decrease in student COVID-19 cases from August to September and that the numbers continue to drop, as indicated by the chart below. Necessary adjustments and additional precautions have been put in place since the onset of COVID-19. These interventions have proven effective as in the outbreak experienced at East Central Middle School where student cases went from 36 during the first five weeks of school to zero (0) cases the last four weeks.



Director of Curriculum and Administration, Dr. Penny Westfaul, presented a plan recommending that K-8 virtual students return to school the second nine weeks, and that high school students “phase-in” over the second semester. However, during the discussion, the school board members insisted that **all students** return to campus at the beginning of the second nine weeks, October 13, 2020.

“Upon review of the data, each day a high school student is not in school seems to be a day they fall further behind in most cases,” said Board of Education President, Troy Frisbie. “Let’s get them back safely.”

Three JCSD teachers also gave sincere testimonies regarding the stress level that teachers and staff are feeling about the failure of students and the additional hours necessary to simultaneously teach students at home and at school.

St. Martin Middle School teacher, Briley Richmond, said in his presentation to the board, “Over the past four weeks, I have had 10 students return from virtual learning. Of those 10 students, all 10 are behind when compared to those who have been in my classroom. Even those who have submitted completed work are behind.”

Dr. Westfaul stated, “We are especially grateful to Dr. Michael Cunningham, Interventional Cardiologist and Co-Director of the Structural Heart Program at Singing River Health System, for joining us in our Health Advisory Committee meeting. Dr. Cunningham feels that the danger of psychological damage to virtual learning students outweighs the potential negative effects from COVID-19 that they could face by returning to the traditional classroom setting. However, he agrees that there are certain circumstances for students that could still necessitate virtual learning.”

Dr. Westfaul then reviewed with the board members the specific list of medical exemptions that will still necessitate virtual learning for certain students. The list of conditions was developed by the district’s Health Advisory Committee.

Strycker concluded the meeting with, “We realize that the transition back to school for virtual students will be challenging. However, we truly care about our students and feel strongly that they need to be back in school. We will work closely with parents during this transition and will make provisions for the students who are returning who may be behind.”

If there are any questions or concerns regarding this press release, please contact Superintendent John Strycker at 228-283-3000.