

School nurse keeps an eye on Delta variant

By Kiyah Daily

The Delta strain of the COVID-19 virus is causing a surge in cases nationwide as the 2021-2022 school year opens.

Durant school nurse Mrs. Mary Dorris said that the Delta variant “is something we need to pay attention to because we have a lot of students that are not vaccinated or under 12 and don’t have the option to be vaccinated.”

At the time of this article, the Iowa Department of Public Health [IDPH] is currently not performing positive case investigations.

It has “adjusted COVID-19 surveillance to follow the influenza model,” according to a fact sheet from the department.

Like any other virus, this is always changing and will be “continuously evaluated and adjusted as needed,” the fact sheet stated.

School districts in Iowa are doing

things a little differently, as directed by the IDPH, and will not trace positive cases this year and will not notify families when students have been exposed to COVID-19.

Mrs. Dorris said she will watch for any signs of an outbreak, though.

“It’s something that I will keep an eye on and work with the county public health,” said Mrs. Dorris.

With the Delta variant and COVID-19 cases rising, some people are concerned about sporting events going back to how they were last year with having to be socially distant, having to get tickets, or whole teams getting quarantined.

Durant Superintendent Joe Burnett said he doesn’t anticipate that Durant will have to go back to limited tickets and physical distancing at sporting events.

Both Mr. Burnett and Mrs. Dorris said that Durant is going to follow the guidelines from the health departments of both the

state and county.

Across the river in Illinois, masks will be mandatory when students return to school. In Iowa, it’s a different story.

Students do have the option to wear a mask if they choose to, but schools cannot require anyone to wear them.

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds signed act HF 847 on May 20, which prohibits school districts from requiring anyone on school grounds to wear a mask.

In interviews with several students, most of them were excited, to say the least, about getting to return to school without them.

“They [masks] were almost as normal as taking a backpack to school,” said junior Max Thoma. “But it will definitely feel better not having to wear them anymore.”

While most students were excited to take off the masks this year, some are still taking precautions.

“I’ll definitely bring one [mask] but it depends on a lot of factors,” junior Koryn Ryan said.

Some students might be pressured by their classmates’ decision to not wear a mask, but Ryan said that he would not because “we have all taken precautions we think are necessary beforehand.”

Another student, junior Jacy Wiese, also feels that masks need to be a choice.

“If you feel the mask works and you need to wear it to protect yourself, feel free to do so,” said Wiese. “But if you don’t believe in masks and choose not to wear one, that should be up to you.”

Thoma said that if Durant students would have to return to wearing masks, he would not agree with it, but he would wear one.

Mrs. Dorris said that she would only be wearing a mask while treating people with symptoms or at-risk patients.

Girls’ golf team 9th at state meet

By Carlie Jo Fusco

Before school was out in May, the Durant girls’ golf team qualified for the state tournament and finished ninth out of 10 teams overall at the meet in Ames June 1-2.

The meet featured two rounds, and Durant scored 816 total strokes, 414 on the first round and 402 on the second.

Belle Rockow, a now graduated senior, was a key golfer this year and averaged 49 per nine holes for the season. She earned 26th place at state and was only one stroke off her personal best.

“We had the mindset since last season that we had the potential to go [to state] and seeing our team pull through was very exciting,” Rockow said. “We knew we had potential, especially when our team would win tournaments and more duals than normal.”

Makenna Buesing, another graduated senior, averaged 55.9 per nine holes during the season and placed 53rd at state.

“I’m not sure if we had an established team motto, but the joke between Belle and I was ‘If the ball moves closer to the hole, it’s a good shot,’ so we wouldn’t get worked up over bad shots,” Buesing



The girls’ golf team finished ninth at the state meet and included Rebecca Paus-tian, McKenna Rockow, Makenna Buesing, Emily Huston, Belle Rockow, Kiley Stineman, and Karissa Hoon.

said.

Buesing believes that if she could go back and change anything throughout her years of playing, it would be to improve her chipping and her mid-game.

“Since freshman year, I’ve always struggled with knowing what club to use on certain spots,” Buesing said.

Another star player, Karissa Hoon, a junior during the season, averaged 56.6 per nine holes for the season and placed 44th at state.

“I think as a team we just wanted to have fun and improve throughout the season,” Hoon said.

At state, the players agreed they had a great experience at the tournament.

“None of us shot a personal best at state, but we were more focused on soaking up the experience than winning the whole thing,” Rockow said. “There are some outstanding teams in that tournament that were on a level we could not yet reach.”

Teen drivers can now learn from parents

By Kayden Johnson

Durant High School students learning to drive can now be taught by their parents, according to a new law passed by the Iowa Legislature.

This law allows for new drivers to get their driver’s license without taking a driver’s education course with a paid instructor. The new drivers must pass a DOT driving test, however, before getting their license.

“I would definitely feel more comfortable taking it at home and having my mom or dad teach me, but taking a driving test at the DOT would make me nervous,” said incoming freshman Rilynn Buesing.

One of the benefits of parent-taught instruction is it will save families around \$370 plus additional fees, said the mother of Rilynn, Mrs. Shelby Buesing.

“As far as the disadvantages go, I think it will be hard to hold parents accountable to teach their child all of the information needed,” said Mrs. Buesing.

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Legislation opens doors for neighboring students

By Kennedy Schumacher

A dozen Davenport school district students have open enrolled to Durant since a new law eliminated the diversity plans of five school districts statewide, including Davenport’s.

The law has “potential to benefit the Durant district,” said Superintendent Joe Burnett in an interview earlier this month.

“It will be interesting to see where we’re at on August 25, which is our first day of school,” said Mr. Burnett. It is possible Durant could still pick up more students after the start of the school year, he said.

In order to keep a diverse pool of students in the Davenport district, the district has had a plan in place since 2008 that considered students’ socioeconomic background when deciding whether they could open en-

roll out of the district.

According to *The Des Moines Register*, three school districts, Davenport, Des Moines and Waterloo, would “weigh socioeconomic status when considering requests” and could “deny transfer requests if those requests would affect their plans, allowing them to balance their socioeconomic diversity.”

The West Liberty and Postville school districts also had diversity plans based on socioeconomic status and English language learner status.

However, a new state law signed May 10 strikes down those diversity plans.

Mr. Burnett believes this new law “opens the door to let families choose where they want their kids to go to school.”

Durant has been losing enrollment,

so this law could change that trend and become beneficial to Durant because it is close to a district that had a diversity plan, according to Mr. Burnett.

Over the past five years, Durant’s enrollment has decreased from 659 students to 585 students.

The additional students from Davenport will provide a band aid to Durant’s enrollment numbers.

In the 2020-2021 school year, Durant did have 76 students open enroll into the district while only 42 students open enrolled out of the district.

With an increase in students who open enroll from Davenport, Durant also receives additional funding for these students.

Last year, school districts received \$7,243 per student, and 80 percent of that

money went toward staff salaries and benefits, and 20 percent funded fixed costs such as equipment and utilities, according to Mr. Burnett.

“Depending on how many students we have [open enroll], we should be able to accommodate them [with the current staffing levels we have],” Mr. Burnett said.

Transportation could also be a factor for families when deciding which school they want to open enroll to. As a district, Durant is not allowed to provide transportation outside of its district, according to Mr. Burnett.

With the new law, Mr. Burnett thinks the Davenport schools are now going to have to increase their efforts and ensure they are offering the best education for their students.