



Dear Families,

We are two months into the school year, and students have had a good start to school. However, there have been COVID-19 cases among students from incidents occurring outside of school. I want to share the latest with you regarding COVID and how it is impacting our students, as well as what it could mean to our Safe Learning Plan.

We learned yesterday from the Minnesota Department of Health that COVID-19 cases across the state have risen dramatically over the past week. Cases in the 10-19 age range are the highest they have ever been; 10.1% of people in that age range in Minnesota who have recently been tested have had results come back positive for COVID. This increase is also having an impact here in the District. You may have seen on the District's COVID-19 dashboard, which is updated each Wednesday before 12:00 p.m., our current COVID case numbers have increased considerably over last week's numbers.

The majority of new cases posted on our [COVID-19 dashboard](#) (click the link and scroll down on that page to see the dashboard) show several more students in the elementary schools have tested COVID-positive than last week. Most of our elementary schools have gone from single digits of cases last week to double digits of cases this week. We are also seeing the numbers climb, though certainly not as high, at the middle school level. The high school number has declined very slightly over last week. Staff COVID-positive levels remain very low; although we are experiencing a higher rate of staff absences due to staff needing to care for a COVID-positive child or family member.

I want you to know that our health staff continues to follow up on each COVID-positive case and then is providing information to classrooms that have had a COVID-positive student at school while infectious and contagious, along with recommendations about watching for symptoms and about other next steps. With universal masking in the elementary and middle schools, fewer students are needing to quarantine, even if they have been a close contact, but again, case counts have grown. At the High School, with few cases and with a large percentage of students vaccinated, there have not been significant numbers of students needing to quarantine at this time.

I want to be clear that we are not in a situation at this point where we are considering moving a classroom or school to e-learning. We will continue to take each situation case-by-case and determine the appropriate action for that specific situation. There is no magic number or percentage of cases the Minnesota Department of Health is recommending for us to use in

deciding if we must move a class or a school to online learning. We will continue to use the best practices we have put into place to make decisions about learning models and any adjustments to them. We also will continue to use the mitigation strategies we have in place at this time, including social distancing wherever possible, HEPA filters in all classrooms and common spaces, our comprehensive ventilation systems overall, increased cleaning and sanitizing of classrooms and other spaces, mask requirements at the grades E-8 level, and strong mask recommendations at the grades 9-12 level.

One thing we are finding is that virtually all of the transmission of COVID we've seen has come from the students while they are NOT in school. The transmission appears to have taken place at sleepovers, parties, during athletic activities where students are not masking, other activities where students are not masking or are using ineffectual masks (non-KN95 or N95 masks) or by contact with a COVID-positive family member.

It is incredibly important that we each do what we can to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. It is only with your assistance that we can impact the number of COVID cases we are seeing and that we can do our best to keep students and staff safe, which is our highest priority.

If your child is ill—even if they only have a sniffle—please keep them home until their COVID-19 status has been determined. At this time, it is always better for us to assume it is COVID first and find out it is not COVID than to send them to school and find out they are COVID-positive after they've been in class for a day or two. Additionally, for those in grades E-8, please be sure that your student is wearing a well-fitting mask to school and that they wear it on the bus, as well, if they are bus riders. If you would like KN95 or N95 masks for your student, we still have them available. You may check with your school office. For those at the grades 9-12 level, masks are strongly recommended. Most of our MHS staff are masking, and we encourage High School students to wear face coverings, as well. Again, on buses, masks are required.

We have received questions about whether the District is hosting a vaccine clinic for young children. We are not, but the vaccine is widely available for those interested in that option for their family. There is a community organization that will be using space in our District for an upcoming clinic on Tuesday, November 16 at Scenic Heights from 4-6PM (after school hours). You may check [Peachjar](#) for that information if you are interested.

We also ask that you consider whether there are steps you can take when your student is not in school to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and questions. Thank you for your support and assistance as we continue to battle this wily virus.

With appreciation,

Dennis L. Peterson  
Superintendent of Schools