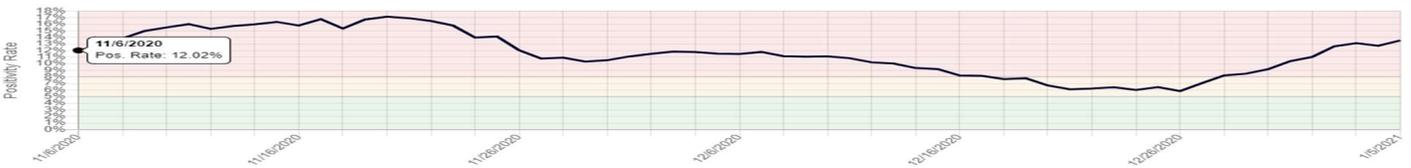




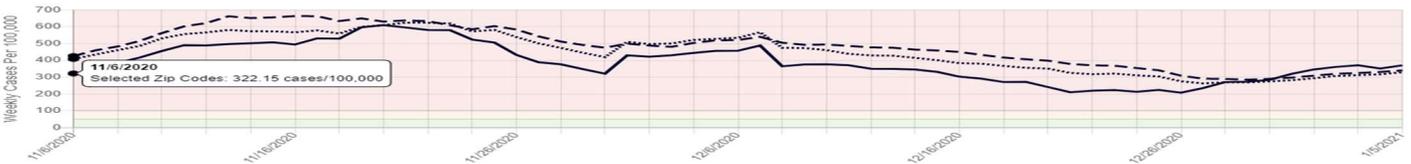
January 6, 2021

Dear Center Cass Parents and Guardians –

Welcome back! I hope each of you and your families had a joyful and healthy winter break. For the last couple days, students and employees have been adjusting back to our remote learning environment. Administration has been tracking school, local, county, and state COVID statistics. As of today, here is where our three zip codes stand in terms of positivity rates (<http://covid-dashboard.fsm.northwestern.edu/>):



As of today, here is where our three zip codes stand in terms of new case counts:



In summary, conditions started to improve in December, and around December 18, we exited the danger area for positivity rates, entered the yellow category, and were on our way toward the safe zone (green) with a positivity rate on December 26 of 5.84%. Although our area did not see the projected post-Thanksgiving spike, we are unfortunately, seeing a post-Christmas/New Year's spike in both positivity rates and case counts. The positivity rate for our area now stands at 13.54%, meaning the rate has more than doubled in two weeks' time. What is troubling for our three zip codes is that our area (solid line on bottom) has always tracked below the State (dash lines on top) and County (dotted lines in the middle) until recently, and as of the last couple weeks, we have trended above State and County, meaning our new case counts are greater in terms of percentage of population than the County or State. On December 26th, our zip codes had a new case count of 208 cases per 100,000, and today we are experiencing 370 cases per 100,000, well on its way to doubling the mark of December 26th in two weeks' time.

As each of us knows, despite our best efforts to stay away from the virus, it somehow makes it into our lives, therefore, there is a good chance that our communities will see some cases in 2021 despite our precautions. We also know that many of us let our guard down or take risks, intentionally or unintentionally, that open us up to greater exposure, that if we didn't take, would decrease our chance of contracting the virus and spreading it. District 66 believes in-person learning is important for students and as a result, aspires to open our doors to in-person learning after the MLK Jr. holiday, however, our local data is currently headed in the wrong direction. **We need your help!** It is imperative that we get back to making the 3W's a top priority. Winter break was necessary and needed, but now we need to be more vigilant than ever if we are going to get our students back to consistent in-person learning. There is light at the end of the tunnel but we are in no way out of the woods. We can't let our guard down. Employees and students must retrain ourselves for consistent mask wearing, distancing, handwashing/sanitation, temperature checking, and symptom monitoring. Our community and employees did a fantastic job of keeping the positivity rates and new case counts in check during August, September, and October, **and I know we can do it again!**

We are going to start the planning process to reopen to in-person learning after the MLK Jr. holiday, however, we can only reopen if the trend reverses. Please be on the lookout for a survey from your Principal on whether your child will be coming back as an in-person learner or staying as a remote learner when we reopen our doors to students.

With your help, as a District we have succeeded in keeping people safe at school. We have not been able to trace a single case back to our classrooms. Let's be extra cognizant these next two weeks and beyond, knowing community transmission is high, so we can ensure that students and employees can return to our in-person learning model and remain safe in the process. Appreciate your partnership and support!

Dr. Wise