



October 14, 2020

Dear Center Cass Families -

I am writing to provide you with a few updates.

Calendar

At last night's Board of Education meeting, the Board approved moving the February 26, 2021 Institute Day to Monday, October 26th. As a result, there will be no student attendance on Monday, October 26, 2020, as teachers will be receiving training in several areas.

Surveys and Schedules

Also at last night's Board of Education meeting, the Board heard results from the latest surveys provided to students, staff, and parents. In summary, the vast majority of student's report enjoying school, the vast majority of employees enjoy coming to work, and the vast majority of parents are pleased with the education their children are receiving. Although we consider the start to our school year a success, we still have work to do to improve our system, especially our remote portion. As much as everyone would enjoy a longer in-person school day with lunch served at school, the pandemic has the vast majority of our employees leery about in-person lunch inside of our buildings. In addition, there was not overwhelming parental support for a longer day with lunch at school. With positive COVID-19 cases on the rise in DuPage County; knowing that COVID-19 does exist within our community through past positive cases; knowing that students taking masks off inside school creates more risks; and without overwhelming support to move to a full day model, we believe that it is best to stay in our current model at this time with kids eating lunch at home. Unfortunately, the need to stagger schedules, cohort students, and limit the number of students on busses, prevents us from extending the school day in a "lunch at home model". We will continue to monitor data and will revisit scheduling in the future.

Travel Advisory

One of the reasons we have been able to offer an in-person learning experience, as well as a remote learning experience, is our collective effort to stay healthy via strict adherence to IDPH guidelines. As we continue to learn more about COVID-19 as a society, the medical and health professionals respond by releasing new guidance.

In the Spring, it was very clear by looking at the IDPH Travel Advisory Map which areas were considered hot zones. At that time, the vast majority of states were considered low risk (blue), while a smaller percentage of states were high risk (purple). At this moment in time, we have reached a point where half the states on the IDPH Travel Advisory Map are blue and half the states are purple. States that are purple one week, can be blue the next week depending on data swings. Since the line between a blue state and purple state could be razor thin, to provide more detail, IDPH provided an advanced view showing variations of blue and purple <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/travel>. County data can vary tremendously depending on the region of the state, and vary even more within a region, county, or village. Some states offer detailed weekly statistics, drilling down to the village level, others do not.

The DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) informed schools today, a domestic travel quarantine requirement for students and employees can be determined by the local school district, as DCHD will default to IDPH <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/travel-safety-guidance>. We have always followed IDPH guidelines, and IDPH guidelines call for a quarantine after travel to high risk areas. The way we stay safe as a school and community is being ultra-careful, taking every precaution we can, and following the 3 W's with the highest level of integrity. We need to be researching the specific places we are going within a state and ensuring that we are safe to travel there, and then while there, following the 3 W's to the greatest extent possible. Individuals that don't follow the 3 W's



put themselves and others at risk, regardless of whether the state you are visiting is considered a blue state or a purple state at that moment in time.

As the holiday season draws near, a clear definition of “higher risk” is needed for D66 employees and families to make travel decisions, as visiting a place that exceeds the risk threshold will result in a student or employee being asked to quarantine upon return. We will be using the IDPH website <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/travel> to determine if the state you are visiting has a higher level of risk than Illinois for contracting COVID-19. As a result, students and employees visiting a State that is experiencing a **higher positivity rate than Illinois** (currently 22 new cases per 100,000) **will be asked to quarantine for 14 days** upon return. Check back before travel as the numbers inside the IDPH link are updated at least weekly. The 22 new cases per 100,000 could fluctuate for Illinois, as well as the state you plan to visit.

Regardless of travel, please follow the 3 W’s. On an aside, DuPage County positivity numbers are higher than the state average and could move DuPage into a high risk category on next week’s data release <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/countyschool?county=DuPage>. I appreciate your cooperation.

IDPH Change

IDPH recommends that schools require the RT-PCR COVID-19 negative test result for re-admittance after a child or employee has experienced a symptom. The RT-PCR test is the swab test that most doctors use. IDPH recommends that schools do not accept the Antigen COVID-19 negative test result for re-admittance after a child or employee has experienced a symptom. The Antigen test is the saliva test. If you are asked to obtain a negative COVID-19 test, please ensure it is the RT-PCR, and not the saliva test. Thank you. <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-COVID19-Exclusion-Decison-Tree.pdf>. If you have travel related or COVID-19 testing questions, please contact Jinsun Baek, D66 District Nurse, at jbaek@ccsd66.org.

Other Notes

At last night’s Board of Education meeting, the Board heard results from the financial audit. The audit revealed that the data being produced as well as the procedures being followed by the District 66 staff are in compliance with state and federal requirements. There was only one finding from the audit, which was corrected at last night’s meeting by transferring a portion of cash reserves to the Transportation Fund to handle payroll when revenue runs short. It was also noted that the District isn’t currently able to meet expenditure obligations without using District reserves. Although reserves have helped the District overcome revenue shortfalls the last few years, additional revenue or expenditure reductions will be needed in the future to balance the budget.

Summary

The Board, Administration, and Employees will continue to work toward improving our academic system, non-academic environment, and student readiness. The D66 Board and Employees appreciate the partnership and support from the community during these unusual times. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely -

Dr. Wise
Superintendent Center Cass 66