



Palos School District 118

8800 W. 119th St. | Palos Park, IL 60464 | 708-448-4800 | www.palos118.org

Dear Palos 118 Families,

I want to thank our families for taking part in our recent survey regarding holiday travel and gatherings. This information was helpful as we plan for the upcoming holiday season. The holiday season presents unique operational challenges for all school districts as families and staff members travel, host and/or attend gatherings and welcome children home from college. These activities are likely to contribute to the already widespread transmission of the virus in our community. We make no judgment about individual decisions made over the holiday. As a school district, it is our responsibility to manage how individual decisions have a collective impact on the operational effectiveness of the school district.

After carefully reviewing our data and consulting with the Cook County Department of Public Health, the school district will be implementing a one-week adaptive pause in in-person instruction from November 30th to December 4th. Starting November 30th, all students will shift to remote learning for one week.

This pause in in-person instruction is a proactive measure designed to decrease the number of positive asymptomatic individuals entering schools after the holiday. By reducing the potential for the virus entering our schools, we hope to decrease quarantines and the potential for transmission following the holiday. The school district learned a lot from its experience after Halloween when positive cases more than tripled the week following the holiday and set off a domino effect resulting in a more than 60% increase in quarantines. We anticipate positivity rates to climb even higher after Thanksgiving.

Transitioning to all remote learning for one week following Thanksgiving will provide time for families and staff to monitor for symptoms prior to in-person instruction resuming on December 7th. According to the CDC, the time between exposure to COVID-19 and when symptoms start is on average six days. This adaptive pause will provide a period of 10 days to monitor symptoms after the November 26th Thanksgiving holiday. We encourage families and staff members that are traveling or having large gatherings to use this time to get tested. Taking these proactive measures will help ensure our schools can continue to operate safely prior to winter recess.

This adaptive pause was a difficult decision, and we fully understand the hardship that it will place on many families. If we all play a part in following recommendations from the IDPH and the CDC, we can return students to in-person learning on December 7th. The school district cannot control the trajectory of the pandemic. It is possible that one or more of our schools may need to extend the adaptive pause beyond December 7th, so I continue to ask parents to consider contingency plans. Parents should also continue to report positive cases by calling their child's school nurse and leaving a message.

I'm incredibly proud of the continued partnership between our schools and our school community that has resulted in nearly seven weeks of safe in-person instruction. Principals will be sending out more school-specific information regarding our adaptive pause soon.

This week's metrics:

- **A return to Phase 3 of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan**
Suburban Cook County remains in Phase 4, which allows schools to conduct in-person instruction. This week, Governor Pritzker implemented additional mitigation measures for our region that exempted schools. Source: Governor's Office
- **Outbreaks of confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools**
We are unaware of any reported outbreaks in area schools. Source: ISC-4 and media reports.
- **Confirmed Community Spread**
The transmission of COVID-19 is widespread throughout suburban Cook County. Test Positivity is

"substantial." New Cases per 100,000 is "substantial." New Cases are "substantial." Youth Case Increase is "substantial." The 7-day and 14-day rolling positivity rates are both $\geq 8\%$. Source: IDPH and Northwestern University

- **Directive from IDPH, CCDPH, ISBE, or the Governor's Office**
CCDPH supports the school district's decision to temporary suspension in-person instruction.
- **District 118 Staffing**
The school district will monitor staffing closely throughout the upcoming holiday. If you are interested in becoming a substitute teacher, visit the [employment page](#) of our website to see if you qualify and to fill out an online application.
- **COVID Dashboard Statistics**
The percentage of positive students this week is 0.3%. The staff positivity rate is 0.3%. 165 of our in-person students are now under quarantine. 2.7% of staff members are in quarantine.
Source: www.palos118.org

Have a safe Thanksgiving and stay well. Continue to check your email for school updates.

Sincerely

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools