



Palos School District 118

8800 W. 119th St. | Palos Park, IL 60464 | 708-448-4800 | [www.palos118.org](http://www.palos118.org)

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Dear Palos 118 Families:

Happy Halloween! This morning, I was reviewing some of my previous October messages to families, and I came across correspondence from Halloween 2016. If you had children in the district that year, you might recall that the movie IT came out right around Halloween. If you're not familiar with the movie, all I will say is that it had a very creepy clown as the villain. The movie sparked a rash of copycat actors across the nation that dressed up in scary clown costumes intent on terrifying children and adults alike in public parks and neighborhoods. These spooky clown incidents were so prevalent that my colleagues and I felt compelled to send warnings to our school communities about local clown sightings. Some of us went as far as banning clown costumes from our annual Halloween festivities. Although serious at the time, I now look back fondly on such occurrences as the good ole days!

Trick-or-treating is a tradition on Halloween, and I understand that many families will want to participate in neighborhood trick-or-treating. There is a safe way to participate this year, and the Illinois Department of Public Health has a wealth of information on safety practices for trick-or-treating and alternatives that some families may wish to consider. You can find that information by clicking on the following link: <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/halloween-guidance>. Questions about trick-or-treating should be directed to IDPH or CCDPH.

We have had our share of spookiness this school year, no more so than the ongoing pandemic. I know everyone is aware that COVID-19 new cases, positivity rates, and hospitalizations are rising around the nation, throughout Illinois, and here in southwest suburban Cook County. Fortunately, our positivity rates at the district level remain less than 1.0% for both students and staff. We have just completed Week 4 of in-person instruction with no confirmed cases of transmission in any of our schools. Our safety procedures, including precautionary quarantines, appear to be working well as the district does everything it can to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This week, IDPH updated its recommended guidance on the types of face masks that should be worn by students and staff. IDPH now recommends that face masks "should have two or more layers to stop the spread of COVID-19, and should be worn over the nose and mouth, secured under the chin, and should fit snugly against the sides of the face without gaps." IDPH also does not recommend masks with exhalation valves or vents. Please ensure your child's face mask complies with IDPH's new recommendations.

As we close out Week 4 of in-person learning, we would like your opinion on how we are doing. Please take a few moments to fill out a [very brief five-question survey](#). Thank you in advance for participating.

This week's metrics:

**1. 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. IDPH did implement new mitigation measures for suburban Cook County on Wednesday, October 28, due to rising positivity rates and hospitalizations. These measures are not applicable to school districts. Source: Governor’s Office and IDPH

**2. Outbreaks of confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools**

We are unaware of any reported outbreaks in area schools. Source: ISC-4 and news reports.

**3. Confirmed Community Spread**

There is no confirmed widespread transmission of COVID-19 in our school community; however, IDPH did implement new mitigation measures for suburban Cook County on Wednesday, October 28, due to rising positivity rates and hospitalizations. As of 10/29/20, Test Positivity is “moderate.” New Cases per 100,000 is “substantial.” New Cases are “minimal.” Youth Case Increase is “minimal.” The 7-day and 14-day rolling positivity rates are both  $\leq 8\%$ . Source: IDPH and Northwestern University

**4. Directive from IDPH, CCDPH, ISBE, or the Governor’s Office**

IDPH updated their guidance to local school districts to include the recommendation that all staff and students wear a face mask with two or more layers. Please see above.

**5. District 118 Staffing**

The school district is seeking short-term and long-term substitutes for teachers, paraprofessionals, and building support.

**6. COVID Dashboard Statistics**

This week, we had no confirmed cases of transmission within district schools. Our staff and student positivity rates remain low. The percentage of students in precautionary quarantine is moderate. Staff quarantines are not approaching levels that would impede the safe operation of schools. Source: District 118 [www.palos118.org](http://www.palos118.org)

Thank you to all the families that continue to email or call us seeking guidance on whether or not to send their child to school. We encourage families to continue to reach out and partner with us to make these important decisions. I know it can be confusing, and at times, overwhelming, but we are here to help.

Have a safe Halloween.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella  
Superintendent of Schools