



Palos School District 118

8800 W. 119th St. | Palos Park, IL 60464 | 708-448-4800 | fax: 708-448-4880 | www.palos118.org

October 16, 2020

Dear Palos 118 Families,

Learning is in full swing for both our remote and in-person students! Routines are starting to be established, and as expected, our resilient students are adjusting to their online schedules and in-person safety procedures. I am so pleased with our progress in the past two weeks and want to continue to build on our momentum. In order to do that, I'm asking everyone to remember to wear your mask, watch your distance, wash your hands, and don't touch your face when in public or large gatherings. Don't forget to keep symptomatic children and children in close contact with a potential or confirmed positive case at home. Let's work together to provide the consistency our students need to succeed.

This week, I received several questions regarding travel. As I'm sure you are aware, all our border states have landed on the Suburban Cook County Travel Quarantine List. Cook County recommends a 14-day quarantine for persons entering Cook County from states on the County's quarantine list if they visited the state for more than 24 hours. I know many families that regularly travel to Wisconsin and Indiana for non-work-related reasons. If your child accompanies you on a visit lasting more than 24 hours, the school district recommends you follow the County's quarantine advice. For more information on Cook County's Travel Guidance, visit <https://cookcountypublichealth.org/communicable-diseases/covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance/>.

Also, this week we reported the first positive COVID-19 cases since reopening for in-person instruction on October 7. Both positive cases occurred at Palos South and were isolated incidents. One case was a staff member and the other a student. Contact tracing indicated transmission in both cases occurred outside of school and was the result of close contact within a confirmed positive family member. I know these notices can be concerning. Please know the notifications and subsequent precautionary quarantines mean our safety procedures are working. I completely understand quarantines are a hardship for families. They are, however, an essential element of our safety plan. Quarantines prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our schools, and we are aggressive in our implementation of IDPH quarantine guidelines to keep our staff and our Palos 118 families safe. Parents must be prepared that at some point, their child may be required to quarantine. Instruction will continue remotely during the period of exclusion so students will not fall behind.

Keeping all our families connected during in-person and remote learning is a priority for the school district. We want to do everything we can to reduce the likelihood that any of our remote students and/or their families feel isolated during this time. To that end, we are creating a Remote Learning Family Directory. If you have a child learning from home and want to connect with other remote learning families to create and share positive school experiences, please complete this online form to participate in the directory. Your information will only be shared with other families electing to take part

in the directory. You can sign up by clicking on the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=JX7go8nKhUmDVRCFT3DIF4EepA5GvH9BIG0es7gRBcNUMUVEVzJaUzhEUTJTNONMNEJTRE9SWUU1My4u>.

I have the following updates for families this week.

Board Meeting

The Board of Education will be holding their regularly scheduled October meeting in-person at the Central Administration Building on Tuesday, October 20, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be live streamed for those who cannot attend in-person. A link to the meeting can be found on the district's website on Tuesday morning. For those attending in-person, the Board will receive public comment from individuals wishing to address the Board. The Board's [public comment procedures can be viewed here](#).

COVID Dashboard

Palos 118 prides itself on its transparency to the school community. To further our efforts in being transparent while operating schools during the ongoing pandemic, we created a COVID Dashboard where you can go to see weekly updated information on important COVID related operational statistics. The Dashboard includes:

- The number of confirmed cases of transmission of COVID-19 within district schools for the week.
- The number of students that received a positive COVID-19 test result for the week.
- The number of staff members that received a positive COVID-19 test result for the week.
- The number of students in quarantine due either to positive diagnosis or close contact exposure both inside and outside of school. Please note that in most cases, entire classrooms will be quarantined, and those figures are reported in the "Contact in School."
- The number of staff in quarantine due either to positive diagnosis or close contact exposure both inside and outside of school.

A link to the dashboard can be found on the "Important Information" pop up message on the district's homepage. The dashboard will be updated every Friday.

Face Mask Accommodations

The consistent and proper wearing of face masks in school is the most critical component of our in-person instruction safety plan. At this time, the school district cannot allow students to attend in-person instruction if they are unable to wear a face mask. For students having difficulty wearing a face mask, the school district will allow limited types of accommodations. These accommodations may include additional face mask breaks throughout the school day or remote learning. The school district will not allow face shields in lieu of face masks as an accommodation. IDPH does not recognize face shields as an acceptable alternative to a face mask.

If you have questions regarding face mask accommodations, please email or call our Director of Student Services, Erin Deval, at edeval@palos118.org.

Quarantines and Exclusions

We understand that the IDPH Exclusion Chart is difficult to interpret, and we greatly appreciate parents' efforts to make sure they are following the proper guidelines for keeping their children at home if required. If you have any questions about quarantine periods or information on the IDPH chart, please contact our Chief School Business Official, Justin Veihman, at jveihman@palos118.org. He is our in-house expert on exclusions and can help you navigate the IDPH guidance. Please note that IDPH updated their exclusion chart this week to include the requirement that a negative RT-PCR COVID-19 (nasal swab) test result as documentation for returning to school with a negative diagnosis (Column B) and additional requirements for doctor's notes for symptomatic individuals with an alternative diagnosis (Column C). The [updated chart can be found here](#).

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. 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. As of 10/16/20, Test Positivity is "minimal." New Cases Per 100,000 is "moderate." 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. Directives from IDPH, ISBE, or the Governor's Office**
There have been no new directives or guidance issued this week. Source: IDPH, ISBE, Governor's Office
- 5. District 118 Staffing**
The school district is seeking short-term and long-term substitutes. The Board of Education recently raised daily substitute teacher and school nurse rates to \$150/day. Please call 448-4800 if you are interested in becoming a substitute. Source: District 118
- 6. NEW! COVID Dashboard Statistics**
The school district will be monitoring statistics from our new COVID Dashboard as an additional metric in determining the safe operation of in-person instruction. 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

Thank you for your continued partnership, understanding and, adaptability.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella

Superintendent of Schools