



Dear Palos 118 Families,

The sunny “warm” days this week were certainly chicken soup for the soul. Let’s hope March is much kinder to us than February! Speaking of warmer weather, spring break is rapidly approaching. We have been analyzing our data from family and staff surveys regarding out-of-state travel plans during break. Due to the significant number of families and staff members reporting out-of-state travel, the school district will implement an adaptive pause to in-person learning on March 29, 30, 31, and April 1. This short four-day adaptive pause combined with previously scheduled non-attendance days on April 2 and April 5 will provide parents and staff time to monitor for symptoms prior to in-person learning resuming on April 6. During the adaptive pause, all students will learn remotely as they did following Thanksgiving and Winter Recess.

Our adaptive pauses have proven very successful. By providing both parents and staff the opportunity to isolate prior to reopening schools for in-person learning, we have been able to minimize positive cases entering our schools after we know people have made independent decisions to gather with others outside their households or to travel outside Illinois. By minimizing positive cases from entering our schools, we also greatly reduce the number of 14-day close contact proactive quarantines required in response to positive cases. If you view our [COVID-19 Dashboard](#), you can see we have had two very successful re-openings after long breaks.

As always, we make no judgment about individual decisions regarding gathering or travel but do remind everyone that decisions made by individuals have a collective impact on the school district. If you plan on gathering or traveling during spring break, please remember to wear a mask, social distance, and practice good hand hygiene. The school district recommends families follow the Cook County Department of Public Health travel guidelines if leaving the state. [You can view those guidelines here](#). We want everyone to return on April 6 healthy, happy, and recharged for the remainder of the school year.

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. 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**

Test Positivity is "minimal." New Cases per 100,000 is "substantial." New Cases are "minimal." Youth Case Increase is "minimal." The 7-day rolling positivity rate is <=8%. The 14-day rolling positivity rate is <=8%. Source: IDPH and Northwestern University

- **Directive from IDPH, CCDPH, ISBE, or the Governor's Office**

There have been no new directives this week.

- **District 118 Staffing**

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**

You can view our updated COVID Dashboard by visiting our website. www.palos118.org.

As Black History Month comes to a close, I would like to take a moment to recognize the contributions of Dr. Ernest Everett Just, a pioneering biologist, academic and science writer. Dr. Just is known for his work in biology, zoology, botany, history, and sociology as a professor at Howard University from 1909 until his death in 1941. Just stands out as a role model for students of color interested in entering scientific fields. I first learned of him while teaching at Dr. Ernest Everett Just Middle School in Prince George's County, Maryland. I hope Dr. Just's legacy continues to inspire students to "see the whole, where others only see parts."

On Monday, we pause to commemorate the achievements of another American figure – Casimir Pulaski. Born in Warsaw, Poland, Pulaski spent his early life as a revolutionary fighting against outsider influence in Polish affairs. After exile from Poland, Pulaski immigrated to North America, where he joined the Continental Army, eventually rising to the rank of general. For his contributions during the American Revolution, Pulaski is forever known as "The Father of the American Cavalry." The Chicago metro area, including our school community, has one of the largest Polish communities outside of Poland.

Enjoy the long weekend.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools