



Dear Palos 118 Families:

Happy New Year! A colleague recently challenged me to choose one word for 2021 that will help guide me during decision-making throughout the year. My colleague chose *resilience*, the ability to bounce back from difficult situations. I also considered the word *resilience*, but I think that particular word best describes 2020. Last year, our school district faced many challenges, and we managed to adapt well in the face of adversity. But when I think about 2021, one word comes to mind – *transformative*. The pandemic will forever change our school district. We will emerge from this crisis a stronger, more flexible school district better equipped to overcome obstacles and more knowledgeable about how best to support all students regardless of individual circumstance. I look forward to our continued partnership during this transformative year!

On Monday, we resume in-person instruction. All of our safety procedures remain unchanged. Please remember to fill out the yellow symptom certification forms. Keeping our students and staff safe will continue to rely on the collective commitment of our school community to strictly adhere to our safety procedures. As we return from an extended school break, we must be more vigilant than ever in working together to keep COVID-19 out of our schools. Please remember to:

- Complete morning symptom checks;
- Keep symptomatic children at home until symptoms resolve;
- Keep asymptomatic children at home if a household member is symptomatic and;
- Keep symptomatic or asymptomatic children at home if a household member is awaiting a COVID-19 test result or has a COVID-19 positive test result.

If you traveled during winter recess, we recommend you review Cook County quarantine requirements found here: <https://cookcountypublichealth.org/communicable-diseases/covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance/>. Please note that the school district has not adopted the CDC's shortened options for quarantine and continues to follow IDPH 14-day quarantine recommendations. We strongly urge all families to consider having students tested upon returning from any travel.

Second Semester Election Forms

As mentioned in my December 18 message and Dr. Cozza's email this past Wednesday, District 118 is opening the window for parents to choose their child's learning model for the remainder of the second semester that will begin on February 8, 2021. Parents must choose between the Remote Learning Only and the Modified In-Person instructional models. When making this decision, we encourage families to carefully consider the impact that changing instructional models will have on their child.

To simplify the process, we are asking that you only complete the [Second Semester Election Form](#) if you are changing your child's mode of instruction. In other words, if you do not complete the election form, your child will remain in his or her current learning model for the remainder of the school year. Forms are due at the end of the day on Monday, January 11, 2021. Parents requesting changes after that date will only receive consideration if space is available, but we cannot guarantee placement after the deadline.

Please know that it is our intent to minimize any disruption to teaching and learning as we transition to the second semester; however, our ability to do so will be heavily dependent upon the percentage of families that decide to change to/from in-person or remote only. With this in mind, second-semester classroom assignments will go out on February 1.

Once again, we thank all of our 118 families for your flexibility, patience, and resilience when it comes to the challenges of the 2020-2021 school year. Please feel free to reach out to any of our building principals or Dr. Cozza at rcozza@palos118.org if you have any questions.

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 warned he might issue a stay-at-home order in the near future. 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 "substantial." New Cases per 100,000 is "substantial." New Cases are "minimal." Youth Case Increase is "minimal." The 7-day rolling positivity rate is $\geq 8\%$. The 14-day rolling positivity rate is $\geq 8\%$. Source: IDPH and Northwestern University

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

CDC has updated quarantine guidelines; however, to date, CCDPH has not recommended implementation of these guidelines. The school district continues to review the updated CDC guidelines and will continue dialogue with IDPH and CCDPH on potential updates.

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

Our COVID Dashboard will be updated next Friday, January 15. www.palos118.org.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools