



November 24, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Since the opening of school in August, Lakeshore Public Schools has learned a lot about the value and benefits of controlled environments (like schools) versus social environments (like gatherings with friends and family) and the impact each has on the spread of COVID-19. While the risk of community transmission has increased significantly in recent weeks, the ability of schools to implement 5 key mitigation strategies (wearing masks, social distancing to the extent possible, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and contact tracing collaboration) is clearly working to severely limit the transmission of COVID-19 in school or at school related events. Unfortunately, these strategies are not universally applied outside of the school setting, leading to transmission in social settings and, ultimately, increasing the number of cases and quarantines we track at school.

As an organization, we have seen first-hand the impact of how social gatherings increase the probability that individuals will become infected. The vast majority of cases that we report as school related are subsequent to social gatherings outside the school setting. We have witnessed a spike in these cases in periods immediately following holidays including the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Halloween. We are very concerned that the Thanksgiving holiday will bring further cases and subsequent quarantines in both staff and students. The number of staff members in isolation or quarantine, coupled with the difficulty securing adequate substitute coverage, has begun to impact the ability to support the academic and social emotional needs of our students better with in-person instruction. To fill the staffing gaps, we have been shuffling responsibilities, reassigning staff and hiring substitutes, if there are any available. Our valued partners at the Berrien County Health Department are also being overwhelmed with cases and their own staff shortages.

Given that the Thanksgiving holiday is upon us, we want to approach this time of celebration proactively. We want to return to school following the break as safely as possible while continuing to recognize the importance of in-person instruction for students - we know it is the best way to meet their academic, social, emotional, and physical needs. Therefore, we are taking the following proactive measure:

Lakeshore Public Schools will temporarily shift to remote learning beginning Monday, November 30 through Wednesday, December 2, 2020 for grade Y5 through 8. This includes all district-wide special education programs. Students will return to in-person learning on Thursday, December 3.

(This will not impact students in the Lakeshore Virtual Academy. Nor will this impact students in Grades 9-12 who will continue remote learning through December 8.)

The remote days will allow for a period of time where families and staff can monitor for symptoms following the holiday. Ultimately, the intention is to ensure everyone is as healthy as possible prior to returning to school and allow us to reduce potential quarantines in order to return to in-person instruction for kindergarten through 8th grade on Thursday, December 3, 2020.

This pause in face-to-face instruction will also give us an opportunity to practice our remote learning plans. Specific information on remote learning schedules will be provided by your building principals. Students will take home all necessary instructional materials for November 30 through December 2 today. Students are expected to log onto their Google Classrooms at the required times and attendance will be taken on these remote days.

Additional information on technology support for families and food service during the remote learning period will be sent prior to Monday.

Thank you in advance for your flexibility, understanding, and support. It is our goal to return from Thanksgiving break and continue to provide in-person instruction in a controlled and safe environment. I ask that during this critical time, please take note of what has allowed our schools to open, and remain open, during the fall - following recommended COVID-19 mitigation strategies, reporting positive household cases, supporting quarantine efforts, and remaining home when sick. It is only when all of us work together are we able to make the learning environment safe and healthy for your child and all of our Lakeshore students.

Philip Freeman, Superintendent