

Update
From Your Superintendent
October 22, 2020

When I finished this letter at 9:00 this morning, I was reporting to you that we had not had any confirmed, positive case of COVID-19 in our school. No student or staff member had tested positive. However, this changed at 10:00 when our school nurse called me to report that we had an elementary student who had tested positive. She also informed me that because of the guidelines involving contact tracing, we would not have to do any contact tracing in our school. Contact tracing is done to identify those persons who have been in close contact to the infected individual **two days** prior to when symptoms first appeared. Close contacts are then quarantined for 14 days. In this case, it would be necessary to identify who was in close contact on Saturday and Sunday so no school contact tracing is necessary.

I know everyone is becoming more concerned and anxious as more students and staff are testing positive to COVID. Schools in our ISD have had to close classrooms and even buildings. We all are following the same guidelines. Anytime we have a positive case in our district, students and staff will be quarantined following the health department guidelines. The extent of the quarantine will be determined by who was in direct contact with the person who has COVID. It could be just a few students, a whole classroom, a whole building, more than one building, or our entire district. These decisions will be made to ensure the health and safety of all our students and staff while maintaining the best educational opportunity that we can. Our health department will help us make the best decision.

STUDENTS EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL – WEEK OF OCTOBER 26TH

Last week you received an update from me explaining the procedure we will use when students are sent home from school because they are ill. Evart Public Schools as well as all local districts within the Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District are following the Central Michigan District Health Department protocol. When counties are considered to be higher risk for community spread of COVID-19, according to the MI Safe Start Map (www.mistartmap.info), extra precautions are necessary. Last week, Osceola County was in the C risk category for cases per million. As I explained last week, I will be checking each Thursday to see if Osceola County is in a high risk category. If a county is in risk categories B-E they are considered to be at high risk for community spread of COVID. **Today our county remains in the C risk category. This means that for the week of October 26th, if your child is sent home from school because of any of the COVID symptoms, he/she is excluded from school for 10 days.** Please know that during in-person instruction, excluded students, due to symptoms, will be provided with virtual learning opportunities in order to stay on track with their peers as much as possible.

The letter that was sent home last week is posted on our website at www.evartps.org. Click on the “EPS Return to School Badge”. Under “Return to School Information” you will see the Health Department Guidelines and the Flowchart for Handling Student Symptoms listed.

EARLY RELEASE FRIDAYS - NOVEMBER

We will be continuing the early release days through November. We continue to find them very valuable in helping us provide the best educational opportunity for both our face to face and virtual students. Teachers will be working on these days planning lessons as well as contacting students/parents. If you have a concern or even just a question about your child, Friday afternoon would be a great time to call your child’s teacher. At the end of November, we will again look at the needs of both our students and teachers to decide if early release Fridays should be continued or discontinued. Students will be released early on November 6th, 13th, and 20th. There will be no school on November 25-27 because of Thanksgiving. Your support and willingness to work with us has sincerely been noticed and appreciated. GO WILDCATS!

Shirley