



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: November 15, 2020

While the Covid-19 situation at our schools seems fairly stable right now, the experts are warning us all that Covid-19 and the usual seasonal flu could be a challenging combination and we should not let our guards down yet.

As you can see from our website portal (updated daily), we've managed to keep our Covid numbers fairly low throughout out the district with just under 150 cases since school started in August and slightly more than 1100 staff and/or students quarantined in total. Typically, as you can see on the site, we have about 100-400 quarantined at any one time. You can find that portal on our website at <http://www.bay.k12.fl.us/COVID%2019>

Please don't get me wrong, I wish that we had ZERO cases and ZERO students and staff quarantined but, given the alternative, I am pleased that our social distancing, mask wearing, sanitizing and hand washing campaigns are at least keeping the spread of Covid-19 down as much as possible. While we know some stakeholders are unhappy with our protocols, I'd like to remind everyone that we are doing our best to follow the guidance of the CDC and we work closely with our local Department of Health under the leadership of Sandon Speedling.

But here's where we DESPERATELY need your help: Many of the most recent cases have come from either one infected person NOT wearing a mask or one infected person gathering with others outside of school (evenings and weekends) and inadvertently infecting others. While we have procedures in place to switch those quarantining to teaching and learning via BayLink, there's no question that BayLink is not the same as brick and mortar and making that change is disruptive to both students and staff.

As we get closer to flu season, please make sure that you and your family members are doing all you can to protect our students and staff from Covid-19 and the flu. Please try to keep your social distance outside of our school settings and ensure your students and family members are wearing their masks when that's not possible. And please, keep your children home when they are sick!

I know the holidays are approaching and typically that's a time for large family gatherings, visitors from out-of-town and lots of festivities. This year, however, we might all have to be a little more creative than usual when it comes to planning our holiday events. Since the hurricane, we've had my wife's 84-year-old parents living with us and so we are VERY cautious in our plans because

we don't want to unnecessarily expose either of them to a virus. Thanksgiving may look a little different at my house this year but we're going to do what we need to do to ensure our vulnerable family members are as safe as possible.

Likewise, I know many parents and guardians will miss coming to school to have Thanksgiving lunch with our students this year but, again, everything we're doing in terms of Covid-19 protocol is for the safety of our students and staff. Our schools are doing all they can to keep a sense of "normal" during these challenging times and I know that our administrators and staff really appreciate your patience and understanding.

And while we're on that topic, please remember that all of our employees really are doing their best to follow CDC guidelines, DOH protocols and BDS procedures. They deserve the full support, and appreciation, of our community for the sacrifices they are making to keep our schools open and safe for our students. I hope that you'll join me this week in being thankful for them, for their compassion, dedication and professionalism.

We can't control what's happening in the rest of the country, or even the world, when it comes to Covid-19 but we can try to control what happens here locally and the extent to which our community is impacted by the spread of this pandemic.

Someone once said "when crisis comes we begin to see that community is the true and irreplaceable infrastructure" and I think that rings so true for Bay County. Hurricane Michael tested us and we've made great strides towards rebuilding our community with even bigger plans for what's left to do. Covid-19 is also testing us but our resolve is strong and together we can protect our children, our vulnerable citizens and our way of life.

Thank you for your continued trust and faith in Bay District Schools and in the difficult decisions being made by our administrators and staff on behalf of our collective safety. During the past few years, we also learned that flexibility and resilience are key life skills and we've come to realize that those two attributes are equally critical during this pandemic. Please know that every member of our team is dedicated to ensuring the continued safety of our students and employees and we sincerely appreciate your support, encouragement and understanding.

Stay safe and God bless each of you!