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**Sent:** Friday, November 20, 2020 2:14 PM

**Subject:** Arrowhead Update- COVID-19 & Thanksgiving Break

Greetings Arrowhead families and staff members,

I am writing to provide a COVID-19/Arrowhead update, and also to express a concern and plea regarding the Thanksgiving break and the days immediately afterward.

**THE GOOD NEWS:** Though there have been approximately 133 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among our students and staff members since the first day of school (plus more that were never tested/confirmed), our data collection indicates that a low level of spread is actually occurring while our students and staff members are at Arrowhead. In other words the high majority of those positive cases likely have come from outside of Arrowhead's campus. We are proud of our students and staff for consistently remaining masked up while at Arrowhead. It does seem to be making a huge difference as compared to the current, massive disease spread across Waukesha County.

You can always check our active COVID-19 data chart on our [COVID-19 Communications](#) webpage, where today it indicates 10 student cases of active confirmed COVID-19 and 174 close contacts in quarantine, and less than 5 staff cases of active confirmed COVID-19 less than 5 close contacts in quarantine.

As you may recall, per health department protocols, a "close contact" is someone who was within six feet of a confirmed positive case of the coronavirus for more than 15 minutes. Close contacts must be quarantined for 14 days to prevent them from spreading the disease, if they caught it. Since September 1, Arrowhead has had about 1,385 students and staff members identified as close contacts who have had to quarantine for exposure to a person with COVID-19, inside or outside of Arrowhead. Of all of those close contacts, just 24 people who were close contacts to a known inside-Arrowhead positive case (versus a known exposure outside of Arrowhead or unknown where exposed), have then contracted the disease while in quarantine. We don't know for certain how many of those 24 actually became ill from the known exposure within Arrowhead, or if it was from additional exposure somewhere else in the community around the same timeframe. As the county health department director explains, "COVID is everywhere. Don't assume every close contact who becomes sick actually caught it from within the school where everyone is masked up for the day." County leadership and health department personnel report that in general people are being very good about mitigating disease spread while at the workplace and in schools, but not so good during all of the hours outside of work/school and on the weekends.

A logical question becomes: If the disease is not spreading much at Arrowhead, why do we have to send healthy kids/staff home for 14-day quarantines? Because schools are held to that expectation by the local, state, and national health departments. Perhaps if/when enough research proves when both/all parties are masked the spread is minimal,

the guidance for schools from the health departments will change. Until that time Arrowhead will continue to follow those close contact quarantine protocols.

**THE BAD NEWS:** It seems most cases of COVID-19 are coming from outside of Arrowhead, and our outside community is *exploding* with new cases. In September, our Waukesha County averaged about 40 new COVID cases per day. Now, the county is averaging 500-600 new cases per day, and that rate is doubling at a pace of every three-four weeks, per the Waukesha County Public Health Department. This means the 6,000 new cases during October could turn into 12,000 new cases by the end of this month. Waukesha County has hired 250 contact tracers (a \$200,000+ weekly expense) to work with positive cases and to complete contact tracing, yet they are having trouble keeping up.

Consequently, our administration team has high concerns regarding students and staff members being away from masked-up-Arrowhead: Who will spend time with people outside their immediate household? Who will be exposed to COVID-19? Who will unknowingly bring it into Arrowhead when we return from the Thanksgiving break on November 30? We do plan to reopen in person on November 30, as scheduled. However, we will be carefully watching the absenteeism data during and immediately following that five-day break. If cases of illness greatly increase and/or we do not have adequate staffing for our school, we will need to pivot to full virtual learning for about a two-week time period. I would inform you as soon as possible if and when that shift may need to occur.

Several schools in our county are preemptively scheduling full virtual learning after Thanksgiving because they saw significant disease spread in students and experienced high staff absenteeism right after Halloween/the long weekend at the end of October. Arrowhead did not experience that same phenomenon. So, we'll give in-person learning our best efforts after the long Thanksgiving break and monitor student and staff wellness and attendance carefully. IF we are unable to conduct in-person learning due to absenteeism, and we must shift to virtual learning for a couple weeks, we could use this information to predict the need to preemptively schedule a temporary virtual learning period immediately following the winter break. We just want to give a heads-up on our concerns and thought processes at this point.

**Our goal remains to offer a choice of five days per week of either in-person or virtual learning. Therefore, our plea is to keep yourself, family members, and the community safe during the Thanksgiving holiday! These personal sacrifices, like only celebrating with household members this year, are not easy but do make a difference for yourself and others. Also, DO NOT return to Arrowhead on November 30 if you/your child is experiencing ANY illness symptoms. We've seen even minor symptoms like a running nose have resulted in being positive for COVID-19. Stay home, get tested.**

Based on responses back to previous informational emails, some of you will feel this information is "fear mongering," while others will feel it is "dangerous to conduct any in-person schooling," and a wide range of feelings in between. It is impossible to please

everyone. We will continue to use guidance from the local health department, along with factual, local data to implement plans and decisions that consider the physical health, mental health, quality educational practices, legal perspectives, community economics, etc. for everyone involved.

Thank you for your ongoing flexibility and support. Please, enjoy a safe and healthy Thanksgiving break.

Laura Myrah, Superintendent & Administration Team