

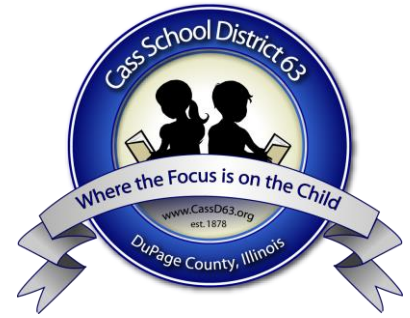
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

CASS SCHOOL DISTRICT 63

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Mark R. Cross

Superintendent of Schools



Thursday, November 12, 2020

Dear Cass School District 63 Parents,

Without question, we are seeing elevated COVID-19 numbers in our local communities of Darien and Willowbrook, as well as across DuPage County and the state of Illinois. This is a national trend that everyone is watching closely, including area school district leaders.

Several local districts have made the decision to take an "adaptive pause" in which school districts pivot to remote learning for a specified period of time. In my conversations with other school district leaders, we are all highly sensitive to the swelling numbers in our communities and more specifically, what is taking place within our own schools day to day. While the community metrics remain elevated regionally, the data within local schools and districts can look very different.

In addition to the numbers in our community, the data inside Cass School District 63 is something we monitor very carefully. Based on the health guidance and with constant vigilance regarding the health and safety of our students and staff, following are several of the data points we monitor daily:

1. Positive cases among students and staff.
2. "Close contacts" to positive cases among students and staff.
3. Any outbreaks or spread of COVID-19 in the school setting.
4. The number of students and staff isolated or quarantined.
5. The ability of the district to staff our schools safely and responsibly.

I believe for several reasons, our school district has been very fortunate to stand where we are at this point in time. The Cass School District 63 COVID-19 Dashboard on the following page shows some of these details, including having only two known cases in our schools so far this year and only one "close contact" at school over the most recent two-week period. Our number of students and staff isolated or quarantined has climbed from 51 last week to 67 this week, which would not be unexpected given the rise in numbers in our community.

The first key is that parents are self-reporting this information to the school district, which is helping keep our students and staff safe at school. There are no words to express how important this is to our success in keeping everyone safe. The second key is our blended framework that allows for social distancing as much as possible, among the countless other safety protocols.

Concord Elementary School

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Laura Anderson, Ed.D.

School Principal & District Director of Teaching & Learning

Cass Junior High School

Cass School District 63
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Mrs. Christine Marcinkewicz

School Principal & District Director of Technology

Cass School District 63 COVID-19 Dashboard

Some of the data explained above is shown in this week's COVID-19 Dashboard. While we are doing well with minimal cases and close contacts at school, we have seen an increase in the number of students and staff isolated or quarantined. Thank you for the daily vigilance with reporting close contacts and symptoms.

Cass School District 63 COVID-19 Dashboard	
Positive Cases Week of 11-9-20	0
Positive Cases Week of 11-2-20	1
Total 2020-21 Positive Cases at School	2
Close Contacts Week of 11-9-20	0
Close Contacts Week of 11-2-20	1
Total 2020-21 Close Contacts at School	6
Isolated or Quarantined Week of 11-9-20	67
Isolated or Quarantined Week of 11-2-20	51

Staffing Our Schools

Along with teaching children in person and also at home during a pandemic, keeping our staff here in person is our biggest challenge. Our teachers and staff know they are essential, but any close contact puts them out for 14 days, just like your children. Being the highly dedicated professionals that they are, they teach from home as much as possible to keep it rolling. The problem is that we don't have enough people to take care of our kids at school if our staff members are close contacts, are caring for sick family members, or are ill themselves.

That is our biggest challenge right now. Outside of an outbreak or significant increase in cases in the school setting, it is not having enough people here at school that could force our school district to take an adaptive pause. We do not want to do this, as we believe that educationally it is best for our children to be at school. Having said that, the first priority will be the health and safety of our students and staff, and on that we cannot compromise.

How Parents Can Help

Please keep up the great work reporting symptoms and close contacts and keeping your children at home. Please think it through and step up the vigilance at home with what you are doing as a family in terms of travel, family get-togethers, social gatherings and sports and other activities. If you are engaging in these otherwise normal activities, please consider if you really need to keep your children home. The positivity rates are high and we not only want your children and families safe, but our staff safe as well. Not only does our health depend on you, but so does in-person instruction.

A Call for Substitute Teachers

One of our challenges right now is finding good qualified substitute teachers when we need them. If you know of a person who has the potential or interest, please refer them to us or here is our [substitute job posting](#) and they can apply from there. They can just click on "Additional Information" for the details.

Virtual Parent-Teacher Conferences November 23rd and 24th

This year's parent-teacher conferences will be held virtually via the Zoom platform. Online registration information for Cass Junior High School was provided in last week's NoteTotes and the Concord Elementary School office and teachers are communicating directly with parents regarding conferences. Conferences will be held on Monday, November 23rd from 12:00 – 8:00 p.m. and on Tuesday, November 24th from 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. As a reminder there is no school for students that week of Thanksgiving when conferences are held.

Reminder - COVID Symptom Testing Requirements

As a reminder, the DuPage County Health Department has communicated an important requirement for testing back in to school after COVID-19 symptoms are exhibited.

For a symptomatic individual, if the first test is negative and it is an RT-PCR test, the person can return to school (Column B) as long as the symptoms have dissipated. If the first test is negative and is not an RT-PCR test, the DCHD is requiring a confirmatory negative RT-PCR COVID-19 test result within 48 hours following a negative antigen test result or negative rapid molecular (rapid PCR) test results.

To avoid the potential need for two tests, the other option is to pursue the RT-PCR test initially to avoid a "false negative" with one of the other tests. In the absence of confirmatory testing, the student or staff member must complete the minimum 10-day isolation period prior to returning to school.

It is also important to note that nothing has changed with the "close contact" requirement, which is still an automatic exclusion for 14 days. Here is the [DuPage County Health Department testing site](#) information, as well as the [IDPH state testing sites](#). Please contact your family physician regarding any symptoms, as well as making certain you complete the proper testing requirements.

American Education Week - Supporting Our Teachers and Staff

Next week is American Education Week, and there has never been a better time to express any appreciation, kind words, or just a simple thank you for what our teachers and staff are doing right now. Those in the military, law enforcement, fire department, medical community and others are heroes, but I think educators are as well. As a superintendent, I've never appreciated our staff more.

We are blessed to have parents and a community that supports our schools, but I also think our community is blessed to have a pretty fantastic faculty and staff in Cass School District 63. If you think of it next week in particular, let them know you appreciate them. I can assure you that there has never been a time when it will mean more.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Cross

Mark R. Cross
Superintendent

MRC/glw