



October 30, 2020

Dear Lakewood Parent, Guardian, and Community,

What's true? Where's the consistency? These are certainly questions that are being asked more frequently these days.

What's true is that for the first eight weeks of the school year, the only positive test among Lakewood staff or students was a student in our remote program, who by the nature of remote learning could continue his/her studies without interruption. In the past two weeks, we have experienced three positive tests. Maybe it was just "our turn," but what's also true is the troubling data received today from the Ionia County Health Department:

- The percent of positive tests has increased over the past week (10/20-10/27) from 4.3 to 6%. There has been 176 new cases in the past 7 days, 400 cases since October 1. It took from March to October to get to 350 cases,
- The percentage of positive tests over a four-week period increased from 2% to 6% from 10/6 to October 27,
- Sparrow Hospital has shared that as of 10/29, they set a new system-wide record for COVID hospitalizations (58),
- Barry/Eaton County data is available through "Weekly Data Reports" links on their website at www.barryeatonhealth.org/coronavirus

In each of the three positive tests in the past two weeks, one each at the elementary, middle, and high school, consistent protocols were applied that resulted in different outcomes. When someone tests positive:

- Contact tracing begins – it really should be called "close contact tracing." Close contacts, those that have been within six (6) feet of the positive person for fifteen (15) cumulative minutes, are quarantined for fourteen (14) days. Contacts of close contacts are not quarantined unless the close contact develops symptoms during the quarantine period. This is why one student can be quarantined but his/her sibling is not.
- The person who tests positive is in "isolation" for ten (10) days while their close contacts are in "quarantine" for fourteen (14) days. The additional time in quarantine takes into account the incubation period of the virus. This is why someone who tests positive may return to school before his/her close contacts are allowed to do so.

When these protocols are applied consistently, they can result in different outcomes:

- When students are more self-contained, as they are at the elementary school, the number of close contacts is usually less than at the middle or high school where students change classes more frequently,
- Depending on who tests positive and the number of resulting close contacts, teachers may instruct quarantined students from his/her classroom or the teacher may be the one quarantined and teach remotely from home while his/her students continue to attend in person.



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We have posted a Question & Answer document on our website that I would encourage you to read to better understand how, as school district, we are doing everything we can to maintain in-person instruction for as many students and for as long as we can.

www.lakewoodps.org COVID19 page > **Family Resources** tab > **COVID Q&A** link

I know that wearing facial coverings and quarantining is uncomfortable and inconvenient. But I also know that we have not experienced a positive test result among a staff member or student as a result of in-person instruction in our schools. I'm not saying in-school transmission will never occur, but I feel safe saying that transmission of the virus is most likely to occur outside our school buildings.

With that in mind, tomorrow is Halloween and right around the corner is Thanksgiving and Christmas. These are times of celebration and gatherings of family and friends and because of that, I want to share that I'm torn as to what to do both personally and professionally when it comes how to celebrate these holidays this year. My purpose with this letter is not to tell you what to do, it's just to be one more source of information to assist you as, like all of us, we try to navigate the coming days and weeks.

Thank you for your patience, cooperation, and commitment to staying safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven C. Skalka". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven C. Skalka, Superintendent