



Superintendent's Update October 15, 2021

Kate Clark, Superintendent
kate.clark@fivetowns.net

Central Office News: As of Monday, October 25th, the Central Office will be in our new space! The address of the new office, as of October 25, 2021 will be: **2561 Atlantic Highway, Lincolnville 04849**. Our phone number will remain the same: 763-3818. Our office will be closed October 19-22 to facilitate the move. We will be responding to email as quickly and as often as we can during that week.

Covid Update: To date, we have had 28 days of in person instruction without any cases of infectious persons in either Hope or Lincolnville, see below for more information about Appleton.

Please keep in mind as we continue to manage this virus and keep schools open, our nurses and other staff members who are calling about close contacts, testing or quarantine are only the messengers! The common enemy we share is the Coronavirus! Even though the information shared can be frustrating and can impact your jobs and families, keep in mind that ***we are all in this together.***

- Our primary goal is to keep as many students present for in-person learning as possible, which means that our protocols may have little wiggle room for individual needs and situations.
- We have to consider the health and welfare of everyone in the building and every one of us has had to sacrifice in some way for the good of others because this virus.
- We are all working hard to maintain a kind and respectful school culture despite the current situation, which causes a great deal of stress. Please understand that you are part of that school culture too!
- One more important point: Home tests and rapid tests are not considered valid by the CDC for return to school or for us to begin contact tracing. So, if your child is symptomatic or you suspect an exposure to COVID, please get a PCR test and report the results to the school nurse so we can take appropriate measures.

As you may or may not know, Appleton had its first report of a case in the school Friday, October 8th. That weekend, the number of reports about infectious cases in the school rose rapidly. By the end of the weekend, Appleton was in outbreak status and over 1/2 of the students were considered close contacts, so the decision was made to hold remote schooling for the week. We have learned a lot in the last week about the nature of the Delta Variant and the effectiveness of our mitigation measures, here's what we know:

- **The Delta Variant is highly contagious.** We have heard this before, but that became very obvious this week. Last year when we had one case of an infectious person in school, that was a rare and isolated event. This year, we learned of multiple cases and, although it is hard to pinpoint the source of the infection, we do suspect that two of the cases could have been caused by spread in school.
- **Most of the cases were unrelated to school or to each other.** This outbreak affected multiple grade levels and both students and staff, but the majority of the cases were contracted outside of school.
- **Our mitigation measures worked!** Even though we suspect that some of the cases were transmitted in school, this outbreak could have caused even more infections if we were not using our mitigation measures. In our Outbreak Team meeting with the CDC, they told us we have been doing a great job keeping safety measures in place to keep spread in school at a minimum.
- **Our school nurses are incredible!** Our nurses put in extra time and effort, even outside of their regular working hours, to make sure everyone has up to date information and can make informed decisions about their health and the health of their children and families. We are very grateful for the expertise and diligence of our nurses!

Classroom visits: I visited Hope's PrK-2 classes in the last few weeks, helping with literacy, lunch, art, music and a whole host of other tasks! We spent a lot of time outside and despite distancing and masking inside, the I was able to get to know the students a bit more and get a closer look inside our classrooms. I am happy to report that our students are being well cared for, and despite all that is different about school right now, everyone appears to be happy to be there and focused on continued academic and social/emotional growth. As always, I am impressed with the skill of our teachers and the focus and diligence of our students!