

April 1, 2021

Dear T/E Families,

I hope everyone is enjoying Spring Break. As we look ahead to the remainder of the year, I wanted to take a moment to outline a few recent trends, to review our ongoing COVID-19 mitigation strategies and to ask for your continued support in following them.

Recent concerns. While increasing vaccination rates offer hope that the end of the pandemic is imminent, COVID-19 still presents a risk to our community. As we approach the end of the school year, several recent trends could complicate our efforts to keep schools open, to hold important activities, and to limit reactive quarantines of individuals, classes or athletic teams:

- Throughout the last two weeks, [COVID-19 rates have risen in Chester County](#).
- TESD has also experienced this increase in COVID-19 cases at a [local level](#).
- TESD has had to close classrooms to in-person instruction in response to cases.
- At least one school in Chester county recently needed to close due to the increased number of cases.

How families can help. It is imperative that all members of the school community continue to follow and support the District's health and safety protocols **before, during, and after school**. With the increased number of students attending school in person at three to six feet of social distancing, one positive case in school can create many close contacts. While at this point occasions of school spread remain low, many more students will be required to isolate from school and activities when positive cases are identified on our dashboard. We recognize that individuals can become COVID positive despite all best efforts, but health authorities still recommend strong health and safety measures. The single most significant way all families can contribute to school operations is to model safe practices such as:

- *Maintain mitigation strategies.* Proper mask wearing, physical distancing and frequent handwashing remain best practices. Avoid social and athletic environments outside of school that do not adhere. The sources of many of our dashboard cases have been events and activities that do not observe these protocols. Participation in school by students and families who have been carefully following these frequently recommended practices can be negatively affected by others who do not.
- *At-home daily symptom screening.* Families are required to monitor students for COVID-19 symptoms and keep them home from school if they do not pass the daily symptom screening. Please err on the side of caution and have your child attend virtually if they have a COVID-19 symptom. Students may log in remotely if they are feeling well enough. Otherwise please contact your building attendance office for an excused absence.
- *Quarantine.* Another proven strategy for containing the spread of COVID-19 is quarantining individuals who have had close contact with a COVID-19 case. If your child is determined to be a close contact of a COVID-19 case, a member of our school team will contact you. Your child may be required to attend school virtually for a time, and a quarantine may prohibit participation in school activities. We ask for your patience and understanding during this process. Quarantine decisions are firm. Although this may be frustrating for everyone, our compliance with this order is essential to the health and safety of our schools and our ability to continue to provide in-person instruction and extra-curricular activities.
- *Rapid antigen testing.* As previously mentioned, we are currently offering testing for students returning from Spring Break. We will continue to use testing as a strategy for quickly identifying and isolating the virus in our schools.

- *Remote learning.* As we saw in the weeks after Thanksgiving Break and Winter Break, COVID cases may rise in the weeks following Spring Break. If you wish to keep your in-person student home so they participate virtually after Spring Break for one week or two weeks, you may do so without the risk of losing your child's in-person seat at school.

Next Monday, we will begin the home stretch to the end of the school year. The strength and support of our community remains our most powerful weapon in the fight against COVID-19. Our collective efforts will help us reach June as smoothly and safely as possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Gusick

Superintendent of Schools