



MORTON
UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

Oct. 23, 2020

Morton District 709 Weekly Update

There was a small bump in student COVID-19 positives this week, but overall the numbers remain encouragingly low, with two absent due to a diagnosis – both at MHS -- and just 19 student quarantines, which continue to trend downward.

Four of those quarantines and one positive are expected back in class on Monday. Meanwhile, no staff members are out due to a positive test – down from one last week – with three in quarantine.

It has always been our presumption that these numbers would fluctuate, but more than 25 percent into this school year, Morton schools continue to show far lower COVID-19 numbers than the community and county at large, according to the Tazewell County Health Department.

Again, please do not confuse quarantines with COVID positives. Just because someone is in self-isolation does not mean they have contracted COVID. It just signifies that they *may* have been exposed. The vast majority are not sick or suffering symptoms.

With overall in-building enrollment of some 2,880 students on any given day, District 709's student positivity and quarantine rates are at .07 percent and .668 percent, respectively, which compare favorably with the world outside our doors.

Meanwhile, we've seen an acceleration in remote learners returning to our classrooms, with that number at 217, down 17 from last week and 40 from the high-water mark of one month ago. Please see the chart below.

Current Daily Statistics Are Not Cumulative

	10/19/20	10/20/20	10/21/20	10/22/20	10/23/20
Staff					
Covid-19 Positive	1	1	1	1	0
Quarantining	2	2	2	3	3
FT Remote Teaching	3	3	3	3	3
Students					
Covid-19 Positive					
Brown	0	0	0	0	0
Grundy	0	0	0	0	0
Jefferson	0	0	0	0	0
Lincoln	0	0	0	0	0
JH	0	0	0	0	0
HS	0	2	2	2	2
MA	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	2	2	2	2
	0.000%	0.070%	0.070%	0.070%	0.070%
Quarantining					
Brown	0	0	0	0	1
Grundy	1	1	1	1	1
Jefferson	2	2	0	0	1
Lincoln	4	6	7	2	2
JH	2	2	3	3	2
HS	8	12	11	13	12
MA	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17	23	22	19	19
	0.598%	0.808%	0.773%	0.668%	0.668%
Remote Learning	229	225	218	217	217
Homeschool/Private	86	86	87	87	87

Recent analysis provided by the [Tazewell County Health Department](#), as well as our own comparing year-to-year classroom attendance, has reaffirmed our belief that in-person instruction is the best overall scenario for many educational, social *and* health reasons.



Sixth graders at Lincoln Grade School

Further reassurance comes from this [story](#) in the New York Times this week, which reports that the New York public school system – the nation’s largest with some 1.1 million students – is experiencing few COVID-19 positives in random testing three weeks into its in-person school year. About half of its enrollment has opted for a hybrid schedule of in-person and at-home. Still, that finding, the reporters concluded, “suggests that the city’s efforts to return children to classrooms could serve as an influential model for the nation.”

We’d like to think that we’ve built a decent model right here in Morton, and we continue to hope for the best.

Meanwhile, we correspond daily with the Tazewell County Health Department regarding any COVID cases, close contacts and protocols. Please continue to utilize our [COVID form](#).

We cannot stress strongly enough, to parents and students, that if you have tested for COVID-19 but have not received your results, please ***do not*** come to school until you have confirmation of a negative test. This is not only in your best interests but consistent with the goal all of us should share of trying to protect others.



From kitchen table to chemistry lab

Beyond that, we would encourage everyone to read and become familiar with our [Healthy Quarantining Guide](#).

We remain committed to transparency as we move forward, whatever comes our way, to getting our constituents the most accurate, reliable information that we can, and to keeping as many students as possible physically present in school with their teachers and peers.

We are happy to answer questions as they come up, and again refer our families to our [Return to School Plan](#). If you have a concern, please contact your school principal, who will do his or her best to assist you.

Again, I couldn't be prouder of our parents and our community members who have done so much to make this 2020-21 school year such a success so far. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey W. Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'H'.

Jeffrey W. Hill, Ed.D
Superintendent
Morton Community Unit School District 709