



MORTON

UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

Nov. 20, 2020

Morton District 709 Weekly Update

In a 2020 of many ups and downs, student and staff COVID-19 numbers declined again in Morton schools this past week, bucking regional and statewide trends and bolstering our case that the controlled environments of our classrooms are the best and safest place for our charges to be.

As of Friday, just nine students were absent due to a COVID-19 diagnosis, compared to 18 last week and to a school-year high of 31 at the beginning of this month. Quarantines, meanwhile, were down to 240, relative to last week's 253 and to a 2020 peak of 348 on Nov. 5.

The number of staff members out with a positive test decreased to four from 10, with quarantines also down to 24 from 38.

We feel very strongly that we are pointed in the right direction as we head into the holidays.

It almost goes without saying that this is a critical time, as many of us will be traveling and spending time with family and friends as we celebrate Thanksgiving and, in the weeks to follow, Christmas. No, we do not want our families to cancel their cherished traditions. But yes, we would like to share some ways to minimize risk in your homes.



Ms. Risner teaches music at Lettie Brown

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has developed some tips on how to [celebrate Thanksgiving safely](#). Please look these over and decide which ones you feel you are able and willing to exercise.

In addition, we are asking all parents, students and staff members to pay very



close and careful attention to any symptoms that they have, each and every morning, before deciding to come to school. If any of us happen to be exposed to sickness over the holiday, we certainly want to keep it from spreading to others.

From the beginning of this school year, the board and administration of Morton District 709 have expressed confidence in the supremacy of in-person instruction as we carry out our mission of graduating the healthiest, most well-rounded young people that we can.

MJHS chemistry experiment beamed home

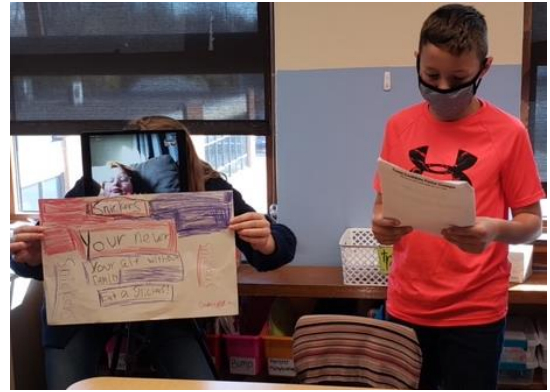
We are seeing [reaffirmation](#) of that now from across the nation. “The infections that we’ve identified in schools when they’ve been evaluated were not acquired in schools. They were actually acquired in the community and in the household,” said Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the CDC. “The truth is, for kids K-12, one of the safest places they can be, from our perspective, is ... school, and it’s really important that following the data ... we don’t make emotional decisions about what to close and what not to close. I’m here to say clearly the data strongly supports that K-12 schools ... are not where we’re having our challenges.”

For those reasons, we remain committed to staying the course of in-person instruction now and as we enter the second semester in 2021. My recent Potter Points interview on this subject can be viewed [here](#).

Please see this week’s chart below.

Current Daily Statistics Are Not Cumulative					
	11/16/20	11/17/20	11/18/20	11/19/20	11/20/20
Staff					
Covid-19 Positive	5	6	6	4	4
Quarantining	42	36	34	24	24
FT Remote Teaching	3	3	3	3	3
Students					
Covid-19 Positive Now					
Brown	0	0	0	0	0
Grundy	0	1	1	1	1
Jefferson	3	3	3	2	2
Lincoln	0	0	0	0	0
JH	3	3	2	1	2
HS	6	5	4	4	4
MA	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	12	10	8	9
% Positive Now	0.422%	0.422%	0.351%	0.281%	0.316%
Quarantining Now					
Brown	13	13	11	11	10
Grundy	34	33	30	19	21
Jefferson	28	36	39	38	41
Lincoln	46	48	49	30	29
JH	62	62	63	48	58
HS	90	89	92	79	73
MA	0	0	0	8	8
Total	273	281	284	233	240
% Quarantined Now	9.596%	9.877%	9.982%	8.190%	8.436%
Remote Learning	203	200	200	200	199
Homeschool/Private	89	89	89	90	90

Again, we cannot stress strongly enough that if you or anyone in your household have tested for COVID-19 but have not received your results, please **do not** come or send a child to school until you have confirmation of a negative. This is not only in your best interests but consistent with our goal of trying to protect others. In that vein, we'd encourage everyone to read and become familiar with our [Healthy Quarantining Guide](#).



iPad sprouts arms at Jefferson



Reading lesson, Lincoln first-graders

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

We are happy to answer questions as they come up, and refer our families to our [Return to School Plan](#). If you have a concern, please contact your principal.

We remain committed to transparency, to getting our constituents the most accurate information we can, and to keeping as many students as possible physically present in school with teachers and peers. The odds of the latter are much enhanced when we mask, maintain our distance and exercise caution and common sense in our interactions with others.

Finally, we again thank our parents for all they've done and are doing to maintain a safe learning environment for our students and staff. Please count your many blessings and have a wonderful, restful Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

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