



MORTON

UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

Jan. 22, 2021

Morton District 709 Weekly Update

It was pretty much steady as she goes on the COVID-19 front this week, with infections in the single digits in Morton schools.

As of Friday, Jan. 22, nine students had been diagnosed with COVID compared to eight the week before, with 127 in quarantine relative to 114 last week. Seven staff members were positive against three a week ago, with eight in isolation compared to 16 on Jan. 15.

These are close to our September 2020 numbers. That is reassuring following the Christmas break, which had sparked concerns at the time of a spike in cases.

That the state is loosening COVID mitigation restrictions is good news, of course, as it reflects a decline in transmission across the Peoria region. On the other hand, the move to Tier 1, along with an expected entrance into Phase 4 of the state's recovery plan, also likely mean more and larger public gatherings in area workplaces, restaurants, stores, etc. We must continue to be vigilant with masks and physical distancing.



Poetry Café at Jefferson

Please see this week's health and attendance chart below.

Current Daily Statistics Are Not Cumulative

	No School	1/19/21	1/20/21	1/21/21	1/22/21
Staff					
Covid-19 Positive		5	7	7	7
Quarantining		9	6	10	8
FT Remote Teaching		5	5	5	5
Students					
Covid-19 Positive Now					
Brown		0	0	0	0
Grundy		3	3	3	1
Jefferson		0	0	0	0
Lincoln		1	2	2	2
JH		0	1	1	1
HS		2	4	5	5
MA		0	0	0	0
Total		6	10	11	9
% Positive Now	0.000%	0.211%	0.351%	0.387%	0.316%
Quarantining Now					
Brown		6	4	6	6
Grundy		18	19	19	20
Jefferson		6	6	7	7
Lincoln		13	13	19	17
JH		6	12	10	11
HS		19	38	58	66
MA		0	0	0	0
Total		68	92	119	127
% Quarantined Now	0.000%	2.390%	3.234%	4.183%	4.464%
Remote Learning	153	153	152	152	152
Homeschool/Private	82	82	82	82	82

Meanwhile, some 80 percent of our teachers and other staff members are moving forward with voluntary vaccinations. If you follow the news, you know there have been problems nationally with the distribution of the vaccines. With supplies short and demand high, scheduling systems have become snarled and technology infrastructure has crashed, in some instances. Still, our employees are getting injections and we have every confidence that those logistical issues will be resolved sooner rather than later.

Elsewhere, we continue to see signs of progress that give us reason for realistic optimism. Today, in fact, the Illinois Department of Public Health announced that all regions assigned to Phase 4 can play all sports, including higher-risk activities such as basketball, football and wrestling. Practices have already resumed in some low-risk sports.



Science class at Morton Junior High

The Illinois High School Association Board of Directors meets this coming Wednesday, after which we should have more definitive answers. Again, continued decreases in COVID positivity rates and the dispensation of the vaccine will be key to salvaging what we can of our extracurricular activities yet this year. They are a critical component of a comprehensive education, one which very much complements what we do in the classroom.

On the academic front, MAP testing has begun and will continue over the next five weeks. We anticipate having a full update on student achievement in March.

As always, our families should continue to monitor symptoms and to keep their children at home when they are not feeling well or when a family member is awaiting a COVID test result. We correspond daily with the Tazewell County Health Department regarding any COVID cases, close contacts and protocols. Please utilize our [COVID form](#). Our [Healthy Quarantining Guide](#) and our [Return to School Plan](#) should remain go-to resources, as well.

Morton was among a handful of schools in the region in resuming a full-time, in-person classroom schedule for the vast majority of our students back in August,

and in sticking by that commitment since. Our experience, for the most part, has confirmed that it was an approach worth taking. We continue to believe that the classroom is the safest, happiest, most academically advantageous place for our young people to be, with the return on that investment likely to be felt for years to come.



Spelling bee at Jefferson

We could not have done it without the patience and cooperation of this community. Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey W. Hill.

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