



# MORTON

## UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

Jan. 21, 2022

### Morton District 709 Weekly Update

Student COVID diagnoses jumped this past week, surpassing 1 percent of total enrollment for the first time, though still well short of the district's 2 percent threshold for implementing more stringent mitigation measures.

As of Friday, 41 students were out, compared to 29 a week ago, for an overall infection rate of 1.29 percent in a student body of more than 3,200. Two-thirds of those students are expected to return to class on Monday. Meanwhile, three staff members were absent due to virus concerns, down from nine. Please see the chart below:

Covid Positive Now		1/18/22	1/19/22	1/20/22	1/21/22	%
Staff		7	6	5	3	
Students	Brown	1	1	2	2	0.56%
	Grundy	8	8	7	8	2.08%
	Jefferson	6	7	1	1	0.30%
	Lincoln	1	2	2	4	0.78%
	JH	9	8	8	10	2.01%
	HS	14	14	15	16	1.48%
	MA	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1.29%</b>

Again, we recommend that parents review our [Back to School Plan](#) and our [Frequently Asked Questions document](#). Please consult our [COVID reporting form](#), as well. **We cannot stress enough** the importance of monitoring your students' health on a daily basis and keeping them out of school even with what seem like mild cold symptoms. This is how we keep our schools open and operating, with continued learning.

The big news this past week was the Morton School Board's decision to initiate litigation against the Illinois State Board of Education and the state Superintendent of Schools. We are being joined in that effort by the Eureka and Clinton public school districts, with the lawsuit also under consideration by others.



Morton students participate in Penguin Project production

It is about COVID – specifically the state's threats to withdraw a district's certification status and withhold funds for non-compliance with its mitigation orders -- but it goes beyond that single issue to the overall principle of local control.



The Girls' Night Out clinic at The Kiln at Morton Junior High

To be clear, we are only doing this because we have exhausted all other options in simply trying to restore decision-making for Morton schools to Morton leaders. We very much care about protecting the health– both physical and mental -- of our students and staff, but we want the latitude to be able implement our own Return to School plan.

We continue to abide by the Governor's executive orders and the State Board's mandates because we do not want our students and families to bear the brunt of any potential discipline should we not. This litigation **does not** invite such action from the state.



Highlights from the Lettie Brown Elementary Spelling Bee

Meanwhile, we remain fully focused on making this school year the best that it can possibly be.

For students not involved with some of our other competitive sports teams, the Morton High Intramural Basketball League started up this past week.



Our annual Gameball Run effort to raise funds for Children's Hospital of Illinois – nearly \$750,000 so far – will soon celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with its major events

scheduled on Thursday and Friday, Feb. 10-11. Gameball Run T-shirts are available for purchase now, so let's resolve to color our campuses and community with tie-dye, for a fantastic cause.

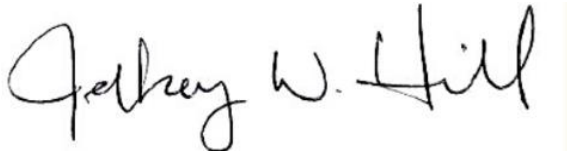


MHS Intramural Basketball League

The Winter Communicator has been completed and is available to [read online](#) before landing in everyone's mail boxes in the coming week.

Finally, it's January, it's cold outside, but we have warmed to the challenges of this school year and emerged stronger than ever. Let's keep this great year going. Thanks to our staff, students and families for all they do to help us make that happen.

Sincerely,

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

Jeffrey W. Hill, Ed.D

Superintendent

Morton Community Unit District 709