

November 19, 2020

As we begin to prepare for the Thanksgiving break, I can't express enough gratitude for our teachers and staff. Their willingness to be flexible in what continues to be an unprecedented time in our lives makes me so proud to work alongside them every day. Many school districts in the metro area began distance learning this week because of infection rates within their county. Oklahoma, Cleveland and Canadian Counties were all much higher than Logan County. With that being said, our cases are rising at a concerning rate.

As of Monday, we had 106 students or staff that were in either isolation (because they had tested positive for COVID) or quarantine (because they had a direct exposure with someone who had tested positive). Of those 106, 38 were the result of an exposure at school while 68 were from an exposure outside of school. This snapshot has been very typical with 64% of the exposures occurring outside of school. These numbers tell us two very important facts. First, our students and staff are doing a tremendous job of following the established protocols. The second conclusion is exposure risks are much less at school than outside of school. This is why we are working diligently to keep our schools open for in-person learning in a traditional format.

It is widely believed the current spike in cases statewide is due in large part to two events: Halloween and Election Day. This is why I'm hopeful our community will exercise a high degree of caution as we begin the Thanksgiving break. I told our staff earlier in the week this is a time to place safety above tradition. I also know that many of you are growing weary of such actions and that weariness coincides with a rise of infection rates and the start of the holiday season.

We have been developing additional protocols to safely conduct competitions and performances at our indoor venues. Masks will be required of all in attendance with no exceptions and attendance will be limited to 25% capacity of the venue. We have been working with a vendor to provide online ticketing and the athletic department will be announcing the process for ticket purchases very soon. Our goal is to allow our students to display their talents with as much normalcy as possible. We will make efforts to livestream or record the event for those who cannot attend.

We continue to host a testing hub at Cotteral Elementary. GPS Families, staff members, first responders and City of Guthrie staff members can receive a test for COVID, strep and flu as well as a telemedicine consultation and if needed, medication will be prescribed. The clinic does not require an appointment but you should bring your insurance information. It is open from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. and they are planning to open next week on Monday through Wednesday but closing on Thursday and Friday. The clinic is on the South side of Cotteral (2001 W. Noble) in a portable classroom.

Many people have asked me if we will be forced to transition to distance learning after the Thanksgiving holidays. I simply don't have an answer to that question but I can assure you we

are committed to continuing in-person instruction in the safest manner possible. I wish each of you a Happy Thanksgiving and please stay safe, even if it means altering traditions.