



Akron Central School District

In Pursuit of Excellence

Patrick D. McCabe
Superintendent of Schools

December 11, 2020

Dear Akron Students, Families and Staff:

As you know, yesterday we made the difficult decision to transition to our fully remote instructional model effective Monday, December 14th. We will remain in the remote model through the Holiday Recess and will continue to evaluate our ability to resume in-person instruction. We will provide regular updates to the community throughout this process.

The purpose of this letter is to update you regarding our testing efforts over the course of this week. As a result of the strong partnerships within our school community, we were able to successfully test 20% of our students and staff, as required for a District operating in a designated Yellow Zone.

As was expected, the testing of students and staff did result in the identification of some individuals who tested positive for the virus. Specifically, out of 274 school-based tests administered, there were two positive results. As per our plan, affected families and staff members were immediately notified. In total, the testing performed on Tuesday and Thursday revealed a positive percentage of just .7% which is significantly below the Yellow Zone's 7-day rolling average of 8.4%.

Under the current Yellow Zone requirements, our results would have allowed us to continue to engage in the hybrid learning approach. Indeed, our testing results reinforce the finding from across the state that proactive strategies and responsive interventions have made schools a safe place for children and adults. However, an important variable for our ability to continue in-person learning is, and has been, staffing. As described in my December 10, 2020 message to the community and staff, we currently have a significant number of staff in quarantine or isolation. Our staffing shortage, coupled with our community's overall current positivity rate, led to the decision to pivot to fully remote instruction.

I recognize that, while there may be a wide range of opinions on the best course of action as we live through this health crisis, everyone truly wants what is best for our children. We are going through this together. Safety and the well-being of our students, faculty and staff has been and will remain at the forefront of all decision making. We must be cognizant of both the physical and mental health of children and adults. These are stressful times and we all have a need for comfort, belonging, and a sense of security. Parents are encouraged to contact our school psychologists, counselors and social workers if they believe that their children need help coping with our current situation.

Keeping the community informed through periodic updates from the District and buildings is vitally important. At the same time, we understand that frequent automated phone calls can be intrusive to your professional and personal lives. Thus, beginning next week, we are moving to a more consistent approach and will now

post positive cases in a weekly letter that can be accessed on our website. Parents and community members that would prefer to monitor our daily reporting of cases can go to the [NYS COVID-19 School Report Card](#) or our school website for [a listing of all positive case notifications](#).

Our collective effort to mitigate the spread must remain strong and we must continue to prepare for any possible changes in our Zone designation. In the event that the District's Zone designation changes to an Orange or Red Zone, different testing protocols are required in order for the District to provide in-person instruction. Specifically, according to the December 4, 2020 NYSDOH guidance:

- For schools located in a geographic area designated as an Orange Zone, a total of 20% of in-person students, faculty and staff must be tested for COVID-19 over the one-month period following the zone designation. The numbers tested should be proportionately spread across the month with 10% to be tested every two weeks.
- For schools located in a geographic area designated as a Red Zone, a total of 30% of in-person students, faculty and staff must be tested for COVID-19 over the one-month period following the zone designation. The numbers tested should be proportionately spread across the month with 15% to be tested every two weeks.
- In an Orange or Red Zone, if the random sampling generates 9 or more positive cases in any school, or if a sample size of greater than 300 weekly tests achieves a positivity rate of 3% or higher for the discrete sample, then the school will be required to close.
- While we are awaiting further clarification, there may also be an ongoing testing obligation after the first month of operating in an Orange or Red Zone.

Despite the many challenges that we have encountered, I could not be more proud of our school district and community. The creativity and incredible dedication of our faculty and staff have been perfectly complemented by the tremendous resiliency of our students and the on-going support of our families. On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,
Patrick D. McCabe
Superintendent of School