



UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

"Home of the Golden Knights and Damsels"

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District Status

11-13-2020

Good afternoon,

Earlier this week, Union School District participated on a video call from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for all schools located in Clarion County in response to recent spikes in numbers of people testing positive for COVID19. The call was prompted by protocols within the department of education which are enacted when a county reaches what is identified as a "substantial" level of cases. This is identified by having >100 positive cases per 100,000 people or by having >10% positive cases in relation to tests given. Clarion County has now been identified as being in the substantial phase for two consecutive weeks.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of Health are now recommending all schools located within Clarion County to transition to remote learning for an undetermined period of time. They have however emphasized that this is a general recommendation and that local school districts must consider their unique circumstances in making a local decision as to whether they change their mode of instruction. Although Union School District has quarantined several students at the high school level, actual positive cases remain relatively low in comparison to other area.

As discussed with the Union School District Board of Directors on November 12, 2020, transmission rates within school districts remains very low and students are generally safer when at school than in the general public due to the safety measures put in place. We continue to sanitize the buildings regularly, provide for social distancing as feasible, and mandate the use of masks. These measures have kept transmission rates in our buildings near zero. As such, Union School District will continue to provide in-person educational services for our students. We ask that our parents and community trust the district to provide for the safety of our students when in attendance, but realize that parents must make decisions for their children and families which provide for their individual needs. We are taking the approach that we will remain in session as long as we are able to do so, should you choose for your child to continue their attendance. However, if you feel that the safety and security of your child would be best served through remote learning, we will certainly assist you in the transition process. If choosing to participate through remote learning, please contact your child's school office for assistance. We do ask that all remote learners log into classes daily and participate fully to be counted as present. We also ask that remote learners conduct themselves online as they would in the classroom such as utilizing appropriate dress, maintaining attention, and keeping background distractions to a minimum.

Through contact tracing, we are finding that COVID19 is not being spread within school buildings but rather while the students are in contact either with each other or other community members outside of the school. We strongly request that our students continue to follow safety protocols outside of school and that parents refrain from allowing their children to participate in close group gatherings when possible as these events have been linked to the large numbers of students and staff who have needed to quarantine recently. Ultimately, the potential for district closure comes from an inability to staff our schools due to these quarantines. Please help us to continue to operate by also preventing the spread of COVID19 outside of our

buildings. Also, please follow the parent screening process for your children and do not send them to school if they are exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID19, as their presence may ultimately cause the quarantine of several other students and staff members.

We continue to appreciate the support our school district has received from our community and we want to also be able to support you. We recognize the hardship that a school closure would place on our community and that the effects of moving to full remote learning are not just school specific. Many parents find it difficult to find childcare when we are closed. Likewise, our students often receive services here which are not available unless we are in operation. Therefore, we believe we best serve our community by continuing to be available to our students, and by providing our parents with the ability to choose whether to send their children to our buildings or to provide for their education in the home through remote services.

I want to thank everyone for their continued support of our district as we work together in meeting the needs of our young people.

Sincerely,

John Kimmel, Superintendent