

2021-22 COVID-19 Media Release #12

Dear Mellen Community,

At this time I am pleased to report that as of 2/11/22 we have one staff members and zero students that have tested positive for COVID-19 and zero students on quarantine due to close contact. Our testing clinic is once again stocked with antigen rapid tests and are available to test students and family members Monday through Friday from 7:30am to 3:30pm. Parents/guardians can complete the consent form available at <https://register.covidconnect.wi.gov/en-US/>. We ask for continued communication from parents if their child(ren) become ill with COVID-19 like symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 to notify the school immediately. This information is vital to keeping everyone safe and completing accurate contract tracing and notification.

Spring Break (3/14/21 - 3/19/21) is just around the corner. During this holiday vacation, please follow the CDC's and DHS recommendations for health and safety protocols. Please remember that we do have students and staff that have health issues that may make them more susceptible to a serious health reaction to an exposure to the coronavirus. We need to be respectful and thoughtful to those individuals that are following all the precautions and are relying on others to do the same.

In an effort to provide our students a quality onsite educational experience, while maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment, the following updates were approved at the Special School Board meeting on 1/25/22:

1. Elimination of school closure guidelines
2. Elimination of masking threshold guidelines - Masks will be optional unless you are returning from being positive and/or are a close contact
3. Eliminate current cafeteria setup and return to lunch tables with social distancing to the greatest extent possible
4. Eliminate language on buffet style meal to allow for setup of salad bar
5. Eliminate language restricting access to fitness center and open gym
6. Eliminate any language regarding vaccinated versus unvaccinated individuals

We are working diligently to provide a quality educational experience for our students while keeping the health and safety of our students and staff a priority. We ask that parents/guardians continue with the daily screening of their children and keep them home if they are multi-symptomatic. What we are doing is working!

The School District received a generous donation from George Kerr to apply towards unpaid food service bills; there still remains an unpaid balance of approximately \$2,000. These bills are carried over from 2018-19, prior to the implementation of the CEP program in which all students are eligible for free meals. Due to the financial constraints of some of our families, these bills are unable to be paid. For the same reasons, the District also has \$331.00 of unpaid technology invoices from lost and/or broken Chromebooks. If you are interested in learning more about how to help, please contact Superintendent Friemoth at 715-274-3601.

Our students have suffered greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic; not just academically, but socially/emotionally as well. Our children are stressed and anxious making it difficult for many of them to be able to "do school." In response, Mellen School District has provided training to staff in Trauma Sensitive Practices and Social Emotional Learning. Students in need are supported through our Guidance Department as well as Special Education Services. We are currently working on a partnership with a local Behavioral Health Clinic to provide teletherapy for students dealing with mental health issues. If your child is suffering and you need support, don't hesitate to contact our school counselor Tom Ernest.

In addition, there are several things that the Mellen School District is doing to address the learning disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The district is providing Title 1 services in Math and Reading, identified students are receiving interventions in math and reading daily, elementary students are receiving additional out of school help in the before and after school program, MS and HS students have the opportunity to receive additional help in an after school tutoring program on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:45pm - 5:15pm.

The Administration and the Board respect the opinions and differing views that everyone has regarding this world pandemic. While we move forward with the information that Districts are required to follow and implement, we are doing

our best to protect the number one goal, which is to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for our staff and students.

As always, I welcome your calls or emails so that I can explain our work and answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Rhonda Elmhorst-Friemoth
Superintendent, Mellen School District