

Friday Update
11/20/2020

Parent Teacher Conferences

Please do not forget we have conferences on **Monday and Tuesday of next week**. There is no school Wednesday-Friday.

Health Updates

For the week of November 16-20, we had four new cases of COVID. Two (2) at Locust School, one (1) at Grant Intermediate, and one (1) at MCMS. This brings the sum total of COVID cases in the district to 18 since we began school 13 weeks ago for students and 14 weeks for staff. There have been zero cases of contact spread in the schools.

As I shared in all my Friday Updates, we will continue to monitor the local conditions and health of our school community and continue to offer our current learning platforms of In-Person and Remote Learning. Please note that this could change quickly and we may have to pivot to 100% Remote if we see a sudden uptick in cases among staff or students. Please continue to be honest when calling in absences and keep children home who are feeling ill.

We will be turning off the daily health app next week, but strongly encourage families to call their child's school health office and report if a family member is being tested for COVID so we have accurate information when students return to school on November 30, 2020. Locust School: 815-281-5024, Grant Intermediate: 815-281-5025, and MCMS: 815-281-5026.

After Thanksgiving Break, we have three (3) weeks until Christmas Break, during that time we will be closely watching the health of our school community before making any decisions about beginning Christmas Break early or extending the Christmas Break. We will absolutely give families as much notice as possible should we need to take a pause of "In-Person" and switch temporarily to "Remote" to allow for a reset of healthy students and staff.

If families are traveling out of the country for either Thanksgiving or Christmas, please contact your school office. YOU MUST quarantine for 14 days after you return.

Learning Platforms

If you are planning on switching the learning platform of your child, please let us know by Friday, December 4, 2020. EMAIL: kburns@marengo165.org. The switch will begin on Monday, January 11, 2021. If you have an immediate concern that you wish to flip to "Remote", we will accommodate that request more quickly.

Superintendent's Thanksgiving Message

This Thanksgiving will more than likely look different from ones in the past, but I wanted to take a moment to reflect upon the first Thanksgiving. You may recall from your history lesson, that our nation was settled by people who were looking for a new country where they could be free to worship without the constraints of the official Church of England. This group originally known as "separatists" sought

refuge in Holland, but after years of financial problems, some wealthy merchants from England agreed to provide the financial assistance for them to sail to the "New World". In 1620, 101 men, women, and children traveled across the ocean for 66 days and landed in Massachusetts. Today, we know this group of people as Pilgrims. As we all may recall, the winter was not kind to the Pilgrims and many died. The next spring, with the help of the Native Americans, the Pilgrims learned how to grow corn, hunt, and gather the natural food of the land so they could survive the cold brutal winters of Massachusetts. The first official Thanksgiving was recorded in 1623 and was a celebration of a good harvest. The celebration was actually three days which included food and games. But it wasn't until 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln declared two national Thanksgivings; one in August to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War, and the other in November to give thanks for "general blessings." It's the second one that we celebrate today." (<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/history/first-thanksgiving/>)

As tough as it has been, our earliest settlers who came here with hope for a different life, weathered some very trying times. The land they had hoped to fulfill all their dreams proved to be a very tough environment in which to survive. And although this year has been challenging for many of our families with loss of income, family members affected by COVID, months of isolation, I strongly encourage all of you to look for the positives and be thankful! Many families planted gardens this year, so many in fact that we had a national shortage of canning jars and lids! Instead of going on long vacations, many families looked to what was available in their own communities and did daily walks. We learned new technology and visited our love ones on Zoom or FaceTime. As a community, we have been given a choice as to how we want our children to receive their education. I am sure all of you can think of many more "good" outcomes. So as we go into next week, please take some time to consider the all the things we can be thankful for and keep yourselves safe and well!

Lea Damisch-Superintendent of Schools