

December 2, 2020

On November 16th, both the Nippersink SD 2 and Richmond-Burton CHSD 157 were forced to move from our hybrid learning plan back to a fully remote learning plan. This was due to the rapidly rising rates of COVID-19 infections in McHenry County and within our own zip codes.

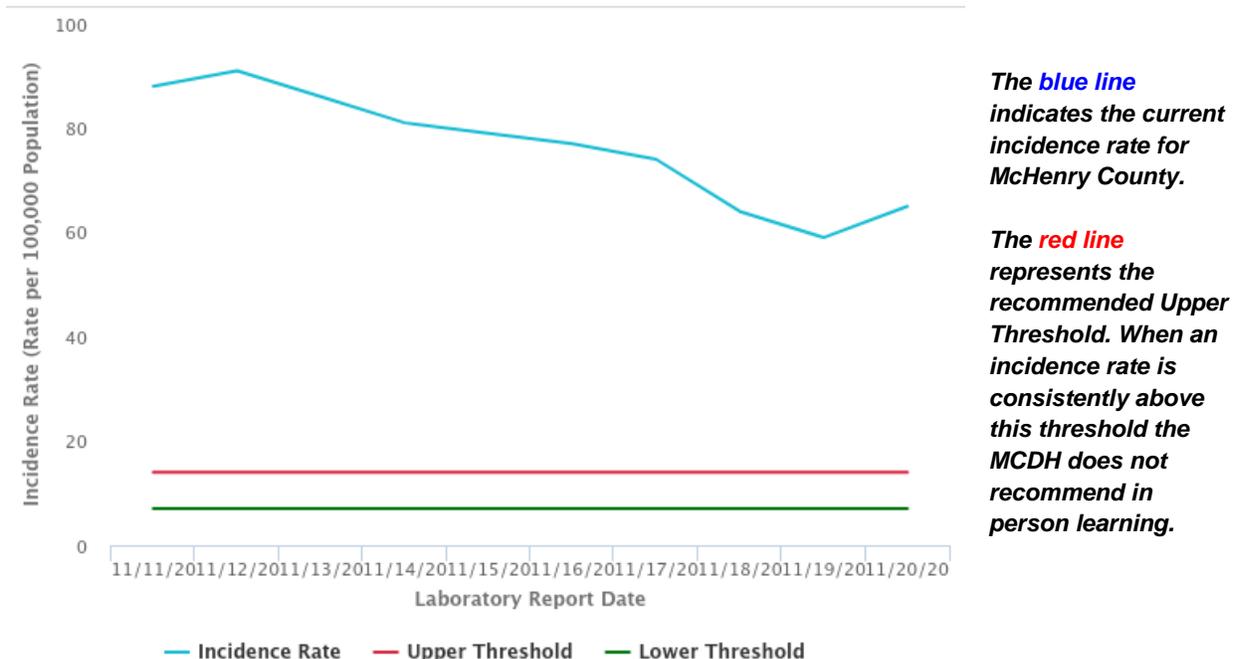
At that time, COVID-19 infections among staff and students were rapidly increasing. In conjunction with an increase in positive COVID-19 cases, by November 16 we had an additional 90 students and staff under a required quarantine. Individuals are required to quarantine if they are in close contact with another individual who tested positive.

Both Districts announced an adaptive pause in hybrid learning until December 7. Our hope was to see the incidence rate and positivity rate for the County and our zip codes begin to decline to a point at which in person learning could safely resume.

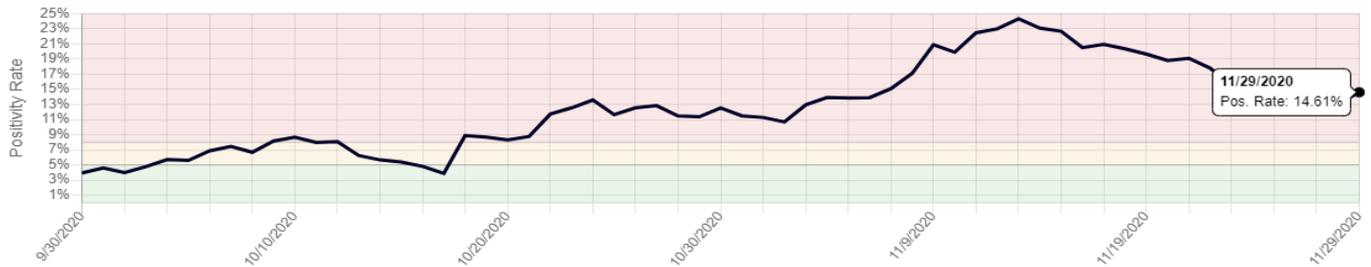
As of December 2nd, that has not happened. Although some of the metrics used to determine a safe return to in-person learning are stabilizing, they have yet to return to a level that either District can safely welcome our students and staff back to in-person learning.

Below is the most recent data on incidence rates and positivity rates for McHenry County and our zip codes. All information is provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

COVID-19 Incidence Rate for McHenry County



Rolling Average 7-Day COVID Positivity Rate For the 60071 and 60081 Zip Codes



This chart shows the seven-day COVID-19 positivity rate for the 60071 and 60081 zip codes. Positivity rates should be declining and no higher than 8% for in person learning to restart.

At this point, a return to in-person learning will lead to a high number of COVID-19 infections among students and staff based on data showing our zip codes still experiencing high rates of community spread.

In addition, a high rate of infections among students and staff will lead to a significant number of other students and staff having to be quarantined due to close contact with an infected individual. This would quickly leave both Districts unable to maintain an effective hybrid learning program or a fully remote program for our at home learners.

The Districts and both School Boards want nothing more than to return to in-person learning. It is crucial for a student's social and emotional well being that they be able to participate in an in-person learning setting. In addition, we recognize that no matter how good a fully remote learning program is, it is no substitute for in-person learning. Unfortunately, with the current numbers and recommendations from various health agencies we will remain in a fully remote learning platform until winter break.

It is our plan at this time to resume our hybrid learning model after winter break. Families wishing to keep their student(s) in full remote learning at that time may decide to do so. Your student(s)' Principal will be sending more information to families, in both Districts, regarding our return to school after winter break and further information for families choosing to stay fully remote for the third quarter.

It is important as a community that we remember these decisions are not made lightly and that our end goal is to return all students to full in-person learning. With two successful vaccines awaiting approval this month by the FDA and new treatments being developed, we remain hopeful that we will soon gain control of this virus and begin to return to a more normal lifestyle. In the meantime, we remain focused on students and supporting them through this difficult time.

Finally, everyone can help us lower our numbers in our immediate zip codes by remembering the 3 W's. Wear a mask when in public, Wash your hands often, and Watch your social distancing when out.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tom Lind
Superintendent