

January 8, 2021

Dear Slate Valley Families,

I know thus far that 2021 has proven to be a trying time for our community, state and country. Furthermore, I know that anxiety is at an all time high. We have had 8 reported cases of COVID connected to either a staff member or student since November. The prevalence of these cases has escalated in the last few weeks. Up until this point we remained relatively unscathed.

Please note that we work closely with health officials. We follow the Agency of Education dSafe and Healthy Start Guidance. So far we have not had any in-school transmission of the virus. This means that while in school, an individual has not spread it to another individual in the school setting. All the transmission has been community based to date, meaning the exposure occurred outside of school. Although this is the case, we are swift and thorough with tracing possible in-school close contacts and through the Department of Health, quarantine them to observe for symptoms until they can get tested. By following the guidelines, close contacts are kept to a minimum in the school setting.

From this point forward, we will only be notifying Slate Valley families when a case specifically impacts the operations of the school, meaning that the employee or student was in attendance while contagious. We know COVID is widespread in our communities.

I also wanted to let you know that staff has been able to get tested at work since November. While this is voluntary, we have a large number of staff that are being tested on a regular basis. So far these tests have all yielded negative results.

I take my job very seriously when it comes to student and staff safety. There are no easy answers for any of us. There are risks to learning in person and there are risks to moving to remote learning. Some of the risks to moving to remote learning include the impact on mental health, child abuse going unreported, learning loss, and further spread of the virus in the community as students have greater opportunity to congregate without protective measures and parents needing to leave their jobs thus increasing poverty. We look at the data and weigh the risks in order to make the very best decision possible for our kids. That being said I encourage you to work with your building principals if you have concerns. We all need to support each other during this very difficult time.

All the best,

Brooke Olsen-Farrell
Superintendent