



# OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

*School Board Report - October 2021*

*Scott Gordon, Principal*

## **Pooled Testing #'s**

We currently have about 240 students and 35 staff in pooled testing on Monday of each week. Information on pooled testing, including a link for signing up, has been sent out in our parent email each week. We also have shared it on all of our social media platforms. We have tried really hard to get the word out and to make sure that everyone understands the benefits.

It is no secret that athletics have undoubtedly made up the bulk of our positive tests and also been the reason for the majority of our contact tracing scenarios. Students who are vaccinated and/or involved in pooled testing make things go much smoother. We are openly discussing requiring our winter sports athletes to at the very least, be involved in pooled testing. This would give them the best chance to remain active on their team and greatly reduces the chances of disrupted seasons - which affect all of our players and teams all over the state when games need to be postponed or cancelled. We would love to have your support.

## **In-Service Day**

On Friday, October 8th, many of our staff members spent the first part of the morning learning more about administering the NWEA assessment. We are administering the NWEA to all four grades this fall and spring to capture a glimpse of where students are at - especially given the last two very peculiar school years. In addition, the fall/spring testing helps to measure growth during the academic school year.

During the day, we had other teams of teachers meet to discuss student progress and areas where there is need for improvement. We purposefully did not “program” the entire day for teachers, as we have heard loud and clear that the year has been stressful and that they needed some time to simply catch up and take a breath.

## **Sports Update**

The fall sports season is quickly winding down and will be wrapping up within the next couple of weeks. Here is a quick rundown:

Our Golf team finished 5th in PVC's and we had no players who qualified for states.

Our Field Hockey has completed their season and they finished 3rd place in Class B North. They will have a home playoff game on 10/26 vs. TBD.

Our Boys' Soccer team plays their final game this afternoon vs Orono. They will likely finish 11th in Class B and have a playoff game at Cony on Saturday, October 23rd at 6pm.

Our Girls' Soccer team plays their final game today at Foxcroft Academy. They will likely finish

#2 in Class B North, with a home playoff game on Saturday, October 26th vs. TBD. Our Football team has one game left vs. Nokomis. We are hoping to be able to play on Friday night, but things are tenuous right now due to COVID and injuries. We will qualify for the playoffs and will play on the road vs. TBD.

## **Teacher Stress**

As an administrative team at OTHS, we are trying very hard to be as empathetic as possible with regard to the level of stress that our staff are experiencing right now. We put out a survey to identify stressors and to help hone in on those things that we can control versus those things that we cannot control. We have had several one-on-one conversations with teachers to help them work through their particular situations. While there are some themes, the answers we get and the conversations we are having seem to be all over the map.

## **Alumni Alert**

Sage Phillips (OTHS Class 2018) gave one of the first speeches during the rededication ceremony of the Dodd Center on the campus of the University of Connecticut campus last Friday afternoon. Sage delivered a Native Land acknowledgment as the Dodd Center is built on Native Land in Connecticut. Sage was followed by a handful of dignitaries, including Senator Dodd and President Biden. Pretty Impressive!

Here is the link, if you would like to watch it:

<https://humanrights.uconn.edu/2021/09/20/human-rights-for-the-next-generation/#>

## **Contact Tracing Scenario**

We had a situation on Wednesday, October 13th, when we had 9 students that came up as positives within a day. All students were a little different in how the positive showed up. We had a positive pool show up from pooled testing on Tuesday, October 12th. We then did individual tests on each student in those pools and we came back with (4) positives.

Consequently, all of those positives were showing symptoms and were all from the same sports team. We then had several members of that same sports team report to Nurse Jana, some symptomatic and some not - but, all requesting tests. In each case, after parent permission was obtained, tests were given and three more positives were revealed. Separately, we had (2) different students whose parents called and reported that their student had tested positive outside of school - with no relation to the previously mentioned seven students.

In this scenario, Nurse Jana made a determination on exposure dates and developed a plan based on where this student was over the past two days. Since the pooled testing was done on Tuesday, following a long 4-day weekend, we felt like the exposure at school was likely contained to just Tuesday classes and athletic teams. Next, we had to take a look at the general classroom contacts and determine their impact. We looked at the schedules for each of our positive students and then printed seating charts to see who would be determined as close contacts for each of these students. For each case, we then made a list of who to contact and began to do so, based on the following criteria below.

- Mask mandate in place
- Seating chart and distance from the positive case
- Time spent with positive case (15 minutes or more, or any direct contact)
- Participation in the Pooled Testing
- Vaccinated students/staff
- COVID positive within 90 days

From this scenario, we had only those 9 positive students who had to quarantine from school, but 135 students impacted in some way. 35 of those students were not vaccinated and not participating in pooled testing, they were instructed to go into community quarantine - which means they could come to school and school only. They could not be visible doing other things in the community and could not participate in whatever sport or activity they might be involved in here at school. They could still attend school thanks to our universal masking policy.

Students who were vaccinated and/or involved in pooled testing received an email informing them their student had been identified as a close contact. Parents were asked to keep a close eye on their student and if they became symptomatic, they should then talk to their PCP and potentially get tested. Otherwise, it is business as usual for those students.

Jana Caron guides the entire process and helps to determine dates, testing, and information to share with students' families, in addition to contacting staff. Amy Ketch, Jeremy Bousquet and I assisted with calls to families, collecting, printing and looking at seating charts to make determinations on close contacts. I contacted UTC, as one of these students attends UTC. None of the nine positive students rode the bus, so I did not contact Cyr Bus in this situation.

Following all of that, Nurse Jana, Amy, Jeremy and I help with making sure the information is shared with DOE and recorded as needed.

The process that I summarized took hours for several people to complete. If this scenario had taken place, we would have quarantined 135+ students. But, thanks to all of the layers of protection that we have, the impact is limited, though the process is very time consuming.

### **Enrollment**

Grade 9 -	132
Grade 10 -	133
Grade 11 -	133
Grade 12 -	136
<b>TOTAL -</b>	<b>534</b>

Thanks so much for all of your on-going support and have a great month!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Caron', written over a horizontal line.

Principal, OTHS