

SCHOOL CITY OF WHITING

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August 6, 2020

Dear SCW Families,

The School City of Whiting has been working with the other Lake County School Districts in collaboration with medical experts from the Indiana State Department of Health, Lake County Board of Health, and local Infectious Disease Specialists on monitoring Lake County coronavirus positivity rates, individual community transmission rates, and local hospitalization trends. The physicians we have worked with have provided us with the most up to date research related to the spread of the coronavirus, mitigation strategies, and guidance on how best to prepare for the safe return of students to school.

On Friday July 31, 2020 the Lake County Board of Health issued recommendations to all Lake County Superintendents for Safe School Re-Openings as well as metrics to guide us in selection of our tier (green-yellow-red) in our plan that guides our instructional format. Lake County currently has an overall positivity rate of 11.7% with a 7 days positivity rate of 7.7%. Over the summer months, there has been an increase in cases in the 0-19 age group which is concerning for schools. Local Health Officials attribute this increase to activities such as youth sports, summer camps, 4th of July parties, graduation open houses, and other summer activities. Keeping positivity rates down requires consistent compliance with the state mask mandate, social distancing, and good hand hygiene by everyone in the entire community.

The SCW students will start the school year using a **full e-learning format for the 9 weeks of the school year**. We will continue to work with the Lake County Board of Health and monitor the weekly COVID-19 positivity rates. If we reach and maintain a positivity rate of 5% for a period of 14 days, we can consider returning to a physical hybrid schedule with the online option continued for parents that chose it due to health and safety concerns. It is our hope that with consistent mask wearing, social distancing, and good hand hygiene we will be able to return to school physically before the quarter ends. Parents who have opted into the e-learning instructional program for the 1st semester will remain e-learning until the semester is over.

In the coming days, we will be providing parents with guidance about our e-learning format, instructional materials pick-up, available support programs, and our meal program that will continue through the length of the e-learning program. Surveys will be going out to parents regarding availability of devices for e-learning. We will have devices for families that need support. We are working with the YMCA on childcare options. The Lake County Board of Health Guidance also **strongly recommends that fall contact sports be cancelled to decrease the spread of the virus among athletes, communities, and schools**. A school board meeting will be held on Monday August 10th at 5pm to take action on the recommendation to cancel fall athletics. All other extracurricular activities will be considered on a case by case basis.

We know that starting the year with e-learning is not what all parents wanted. This has been a very difficult decision for us to make and we have carefully considered all aspects. There is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our students and teachers. Please know that we will be working hard to support all of our students and families.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Scroggins, Superintendent of Schools
School City of Whiting Board of Trustees

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