

POCAHONTAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"PREPARING TODAY FOR TOMORROW"

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The 2020-2021 Pocahontas school year is now over a week old. I wanted to take this opportunity to say how proud I am of the students, staff, and parents for getting the year off to a great start. Everyone is having to adjust to a unique set of challenges which have the potential to create anxiety. Yet I am impressed with positive attitudes and the desire to make the best of a difficult situation. We would all like to believe that it is possible to get through the year without having any cases of Covid-19 here in our school. However, we all realize that is an unrealistic expectation. Therefore, I wanted to take this opportunity to explain the protocols we will use in the event we have one or more positive cases.

Should someone, student or faculty, test positive for Covid-19 we will immediately begin the process of contact tracing. Contact tracing involves determining if anyone at school qualifies as a "close contact". A close contact is anyone who has been within six feet for more than fifteen minutes of someone who has tested positive for the virus. The school will contact the parent of any child who is determined to be a close contact. We will also contact the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to acquire their guidance in best practices to stop the spread. Please remember that in order to protect the privacy of students and staff, we cannot share personal information regarding a positive case. Therefore, we will not issue a public statement in every situation where someone has tested positive or been quarantined due to the virus.

In the event that we have multiple positive cases, it is possible that we may have to pivot to at home virtual classes. This will depend on the number of cases and could result in pivoting a single classroom, grade, building, or the entire district to at home virtual classrooms. The timeframe for this will be determined on the length of time it takes to control the spread. The district will work in conjunction with ADH and DESE to decide when to resume on campus instruction.

Let's continue to work together to control the spread of the virus while providing a quality education for our children.

Information regarding the levels of response, and much more, can be found on the DESE website at:

<http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/divisions/communications/arkansas-ready-for-learning>.

*Board Members: Dr. Michael Davis, President; Jim Toney, Vice President;
Karen Blatz, Secretary; Judy McClain, Gary Cole*

Additional information regarding symptoms of Covid-19 and strategies to avoid exposure can be found at the Arkansas Department of Health website and the CDC website at the following web addresses: <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Sincerely,

Jerry Martens
Superintendent
Pocahontas School District

*Board Members: Dr. Michael Davis, President; Jim Toney, Vice President;
Karen Blatz, Secretary; Judy McClain, Gary Cole*