

## Ohio Public Health Advisory System up date and how it impacts our schools

The Ohio Department of Health works directly with the county and local health departments to determine the degree of the virus' spread through a data-driven framework and designates counties with a color based on indicators met. The link to that system is:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/public-health-advisory-system/public-health-advisory-system>

The system is part of what drives the decisions for our schools to move from an in-person 5 days a week, to a hybrid every other day, or to a completely remote education. The risk levels for Oct 9<sup>th</sup> placed Columbiana County in Orange and Mahoning County in Red. A county gets designated as red when the entire county has met 4 of the 7 indicators established by the data-driven framework. Columbiana County has met 3 indicators as of last week which placed our county in the orange color indicating an increased spread and exposure to the virus. Mahoning County has met 4 of the 7 indicators placing them in the red color indicating a very high exposure and spread of the virus. Yellow counties have met 0-1 indicators and no counties have reached purple with 6 or 7 indicators.

Counties with an "H" have High Case Incidence



Our school district is geographically located between Mahoning and Columbiana Counties but is governed by the Columbiana County Health Department. With this being said, Wesley Vins, Columbiana County Health Commissioner, works with Mahoning County on behalf of our district for cases that occur in Mahoning County that would directly impact our schools. The school superintendents in Columbiana County meet with Mr. Vins each Friday of the preceding week to review the data and discuss the spread with regard to the county schools. This communication determines how each individual district will apply the spread of the disease to individual school plans for educational purposes. The Health Commissioner dives deeper into the indicators and discuss the ramifications that caused our county to meet certain indicators. For instance, this week our county met the indicator for outpatient visits. This indicator was met based on the increased number of individuals that sought out care while presenting symptoms of COVID-19. While these individuals had symptoms of COVID-19 they did not necessarily test positive for COVID-19. The Health Department is privy to this deeper data that permits schools to understand the severity or lack of severity to a met indicator. Long term care facility outbreaks can cause the county to meet an indicator, but do not necessarily present a threat to the schools. Additional information can be shared by the commissioner that isolates outbreaks based on events that are tracked and traced. These events spike numbers, but can be concluded to not have an impact on the schools within the county. Understanding the data and correlating it to the state advisory system will not necessarily match up directly to our school plan. Here is an example. Many districts in Mahoning County have a hybrid response to their district reaching a red indicator. However, based on the data, no schools were impacted by the counties red designation. The Mahoning County Health Commissioner communicated that he had no change in the threat to the schools. The data for the indicator and county color change did not directly impact the schools and therefore did not reach a red marker for the individual school-wide plans in Mahoning County. This means the county can be one color and the district plan can be another color. It is also possible that a school within the county can have an outbreak and be red or purple while the rest of the schools in the county or even within a district can be yellow or orange. Neither the Health Department nor the school district wants to cause confusion, but

parents will be notified the Friday prior to the start of a new school week if our schools or the entire district will reach a change in the educational format.

We have done a fantastic job mitigating the Coronavirus. Students PreK-12 continue to work with the mask mandate, keep their hygiene to its maximum cleanliness, and social distance when at all possible. We could not be more proud of the job that our parents, families and students have done to help keep our schools and extra-curricular programs open. My own personal gratitude goes out to our principals, teachers and support staff for going the extra-mile to make sure students in the Columbiana School District have the finest educational opportunities while operating in a pandemic. They are incredible and deserve our gratitude.

As we near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> nine weeks, many students are returning to regular educational options. We will continue to be working to maintain the safe environment which will require everyone to keep their guard up for the virus. We need to keep in mind that if your child is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 that parents keep them home and consider seeking medical advice. We will encourage the staff to make referrals to the nurse when they observe any signs of illness in our students. Each of our school buildings have a school nurse who has the authority to send students home for illness. We prefer that parents be observant before they leave for the bus or private transportation. Although we have temperature scanners here at the buildings, we ask that our parents also monitor daily temperatures at home to eliminate the risk of exposure to any illness including the Coronavirus. We appreciate this partnership with home to keep everyone safe from illness at school.

Lastly, as we finish some of the fall athletic programs, we have not received guidance from the state of Ohio or the Ohio High School Athletic Association regarding winter sports programs. We will provide mandates and changes to anyone involved as a coach, athlete, or spectator as they are released to our school district. We appreciate all that you do to keep our students and staff safe during this difficult and changing environment and thank each and every one of you for assisting in the compliance that is necessary to help us provide an education that is as normal as possible in this anything but normal time.

Thank you,

Donald Mook, Ed. D.

