

East Marshall Community School



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Sept. 10, 2020

Dear East Marshall Parents/Guardians:

There are two measures that school officials will review when making determinations about modes of delivering instruction and conducting school. One measure is the school absenteeism percentage and the other measure is the COVID-19 positivity rate in the county. You most likely have seen information about COVID-19 positivity rates in various counties in Iowa, as well. Specifically, Marshall County is at 11.4% (Sept. 9, 2020). This means that the percentage of those who are tested for COVID-19, 11.4% are positive. It is not the percentage of overall individuals who are positive. Below I am sharing information about this, as well some basic communication regarding COVID-19.

You may have seen the state school closure guidelines on posted documents and briefings. A flow chart that follows the state issued criteria can be found on our school district website. It states when the positivity rate exceeds 15% over the past 14 days and school absenteeism is above 10%, the school can “apply” to the Department of Education to go 100% online. Today our absenteeism rate is 3.3%. A school can also apply to the Department of Education to go online if that positive percentage goes over 20%, without the absenteeism criteria. At this time, we will continue to hold school face to face. As always we will continue to monitor the data closely.

Also, I want to update you on some communication topics. One of three letters will be sent to parents of students that are directly exposed to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, as determined after consultation with the County Department of Public Health. Samples of the three letters can be found on the school district website. One of these letters will be sent to those who were in a category of “group exposure”, “direct exposure”, or “individual with COVID-19”. When a positive COVID-19 case is identified the students associated as “close contacts” of this positive case will also be notified, by the Department of Health, who will be conducting contact tracing, with collaboration of school officials. There are also situations where individuals are exposed away from school, which are also close contacts. Typically this occurs when a parent has tested positive. Those close contacts to a positive case will need to stay home for 14 days and be symptom free upon returning to school. There will not be notifications for this.

We will also give a weekly update of where our school is with COVID-19 cases. Because of confidentiality, we are not able to be more specific. It will appear on the COVID-19 tab of our web page as follows:

East Marshall COVID-19 Status Update - September 3, 2020

Staff or Students Testing Positive 0

Staff or Students in Quarantine due to close contact with a positive case or other reason as directed by the Department of Public Health. 0

Additional guidance on determining when to close school due to positive cases of COVID-19 can be found on our district website at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1F40kNPXdY8XdVTUretet5WXfXhS1Hn23pD53laaZr1w/edit?ts=5f593987>

I want to thank our staff, students, and parents for a great beginning of the school year. The first few days have been fantastic and successful. It is with great pride when I speak of how well our students and staff have adjusted. The mitigation practices have been supported by both students and staff. I am grateful for to our staff for the amount of preparation that has occurred to ensure a successful school year and we appreciate parents who have given us grace and patience as we work through the uncharted waters of conducting onsite education during COVID-19. Our staff is focused on working through challenging situations. Our students have been awesome! Face coverings and other mitigation practices are not always convenient, but we all have adjusted well.

As always, today is a great day to be a Mustang!

Yours in education,

Anthony Ryan

Superintendent