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December 31, 2021

I hope everyone has had a safe and relaxing holiday break. For me, it was great to see family at Christmas and spend more time with my children. We know that Lorain City Schools have changed their start date. We will still begin school on our scheduled date of January 4th.

Over the past few weeks, the state of Ohio has seen a surge in COVID-19 cases. This has a large part to do with the Holiday Season as well as the Delta and Omicron Variant. There has also been a dangerous increase in Influenza A cases in our local area. Saying all of this, we want to maintain our communication with all of you and review/update our policies.

 We want to start this off by saying our number one goal is the safety of our staff and students. Our second goal is to stay in the classroom and not go to virtual learning this school year. To do that, we need to make sacrifices and compromises.

 First, please email Mr. Alarcon at alarconj@stanthonylorain.com if your child has **tested positive and/or will be in quarantine upon our return to school on January 4th**. We want to communicate this information to their teachers, so they can quickly setup work for them when we come back.

 Second, with not only the increase in COVID-19 cases, but also the increase of Influenza A and the common cold, **we have decided to enlist a temporary mask mandate for the month of January**. Once the month ends, we will re-examine this policy and communicate any changes with our parents. While this was a difficult decision, we felt it was best to help offset the potential surge within our school.

 Third, we all received the latest guidance from the CDC and the Lorain County Health Department detailing quarantine policies. We will be updating our plan to mirror their recommendations:

From the CDC:

"Given what we currently know about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, CDC is shortening the recommended time for isolation for the public. People with COVID-19 should isolate for 5 days and if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), follow that by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after. Additionally, CDC is updating the recommended quarantine period for anyone in the general public who is exposed to COVID-19. For people who are unvaccinated or are more than six months out from their second mRNA dose (or more than 2 months after the J&J vaccine) and not yet boosted, CDC now recommends quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days.

Individuals who have received their booster shot do not need to be quarantined following an exposure but should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure. For all those exposed, best practice would also include a test for SARS-CoV-2 at day 5 after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19."

If a student/staff member test positive for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status)

* Stay home for 5 days
* If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolved after 5 days, you can return back to school (will be required to wear a mask for 5 additional days – if school mask mandate dissolves)
* If you have symptoms still after 5 days, you will be required to stay home until they are gone

If a student/staff member were exposed to someone with COVID-19

**If you:**

**Have been boosted**
**OR**
Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months
**OR**
Completed the primary series of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months

* Wear a mask around others and test on day 5 if possible

**If you:**

Completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted
**OR**
Completed the primary series of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted
**OR**
Are unvaccinated

* Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
* Test on day 5 if possible.

Again, our preference is to operate in person when possible while remaining safe. Indications of an outbreak or a lack of ability to staff safely are reasons to move to remote learning temporarily. Experience has proven that what other schools are doing, including the local public schools, should not be important factors for an individual school’s decisions.

We are excited to announce we have received our first five Blue Zone air purifier machines. We are expecting others to trickle in over the coming weeks. We are one of the few places in the state to have these machines. They are designed to purify 99.995% of the air every ten minutes. Once we receive all our ordered machines, they will be in every classroom as well as the school cafeteria.

We know that COVID-19 and Influenza A will continue to be in our communities, something we cannot control, but the conditions of our schools are within our control.

* We believe that in-person learning, when done safely, is best.
* We know that masks, ventilation, hand hygiene, distancing, and surface cleaning are all layers of protection against COVID-19.
* We will continue to monitor the data on the variants and Influenza A in our communities, currently Delta and Omicron, and their effects on our school-age populations, from Pre to K-8.
* When in-person learning is not possible, we are prepared to continue learning with quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and we have technology tools in place.
* We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children, and we seek to partner with them in providing information, seeking input, and communicating decisions.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at alarconj@stanthonylorain.com

God Bless,

Mr. Alarcon