



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SHULLSBURG
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November 12, 2020

Dear Students, Parents/Caregivers,

As you all very well know we are living through an ever-increasing rise in Covid-19 cases in our nation, state, county and school district. The significant rise in cases has had a direct impact on our school district and our ability to provide in-person quality instruction for our students. Please keep in mind that we have been unable to find any evidence of the virus being traced back to infection occurring within the school building, and I believe this is because of the cleaning measures put in place and our staff and student's attempts to adhere to hand-washing, social distancing and self-monitoring their symptoms. Rather, the positive cases and contact tracing we have had to do has been because of contacts with a positive person(s) outside of the school environment. Therefore, we are relegated to doing damage control and through our contact tracing and communications with the Lafayette County Health Department have had to quarantine students and staff to ensure the safety of those who may have had contact and those who have not. Recently, the number of students and staff required to quarantine has forced specific individuals, class sections, entire classes and the entire junior high and high school into prolonged quarantines. Sending students and staff into quarantine is not something we take lightly as we will always err on the side of safety, even at the begrudging of some who may think we are going too far. We understand, and are empathetic, to our students and their families, as well as our staff, that moving in and out of virtual instruction and the potential anxiety of "not knowing" when this movement is going to occur is not healthy for any of us. Unfortunately, the situational difficulty of this pandemic has caused much anxiety in all of us.

At the Wednesday, November 11, 2020 the School Board approved pivoting the entire school district into remote virtual instruction beginning Monday, November 30th after the Thanksgiving holiday and continuing through December 11th. The anticipated return to in-person instruction would be Monday, December 14th, barring further board action. Making this decision now affords advanced notice to families so those that need to find daycare or make changes to their work schedules would have ample time to do so. Another reason for the move to remote virtual instruction is the impending uncertainty of having students and staff return to the building after potentially having further contacts with friends or relatives over the holiday break. Even with the feedback from the survey sent out to parents/caregivers which showed that 56% of our families were in favor of this type of move, in some form, rest assured this was not a decision made in haste. The school board discussed this at length before deciding the outcome. There is the very real possibility that if the number of positive cases in the county were to continue to rise the school board may choose to extend the time period for remote virtual instruction to a date on the other side of the new year for the safety of our students and staff. The board has scheduled a Special Board Meeting for Monday, November 23rd to entertain such a possibility.

We can all agree that having our students and staff engaged in in-person instruction is the best means of instruction. We may also all agree that very few people become extremely ill from this virus and even fewer people may die from the progression of the virus. But I would hope we can definitely all agree that one life lost in our community due to this virus would be one life lost too many. So, while moving away

from in-person instruction for an extended period of time is not ideal it is the best alternative for our school community in our efforts to do our part to prevent that one life lost from happening.

Lastly, we are in no way telling people how to live their lives, but we ask that all of you consider the choices we may make in the coming days and weeks. These decisions may have an impact on our students and our methods of providing instruction. It is my hope that all of you stay well in the near and distant future.

Regards,

Mark Lierman, District Administrator