



COUNTY OF POLK
Health Department
www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health

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Dear Polk County Superintendents and Principals,

We come to you with a plea, we need your help reducing the spread of COVID-19 in our community. As of November 12, 2020, our positivity rate is 20.8%. The situation is very real, urgent and not slowing down any time soon. We need to change the trajectory of this disease and the impact we are feeling in our community. We are asking you to communicate the information below with your District's families and staff. Their actions away from school have a big impact on the health of our entire community.

- **Wear a mask!** We cannot stress the importance of wearing a mask. This is the best form of protection against COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have now provided new guidance that wearing a mask can protect BOTH the person wearing the mask and those around you. Wearing a mask will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community.
- **Stay home.** If an individual is sick, whether it is a student or a staff member, stay home. Contact your healthcare provider to discuss your symptoms and see if you need to be tested for COVID-19. If you are waiting for COVID-19 test results, stay home. If you go back to work or school, you can potentially expose everyone around you to COVID-19. Finally, if a student or staff member is in quarantine or isolation, they need to abide by the rules from public health and healthcare providers. When people do not follow the rules of quarantine and isolation, this increases positive cases and hospitalizations.
- **Reduce community spread.** Limiting our contact with others is our new normal. We know it is difficult for family and friends not to see each other especially with the holidays coming up. However, we need to strongly encourage our community to limit who they are around and places they are going. This means limiting going to gatherings, social events and places where people who are not your immediate family are at. The people you are around and the places you go impact your health and your family's health. We need our students and staff to make smart decisions outside of school and would appreciate your help sharing this message.

It's past the time to begin taking this virus seriously. This means wearing a mask, staying at home and not attending events or gatherings small or large. The choices we make have consequences. Please help us reduce community spread in Polk County.

Sincerely,

Helen Eddy, Polk County Health Department Director