

ARCADIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Create.....Inspire.....Learn

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Through the last school year, as we dealt with COVID-19 issues, the Board of Education, administration, and staff of Arcadia Public Schools always had the safety of the students, staff, their families, and the community as a whole foremost while making and implementing plans. Even though there was a bump or two in the road we traveled, we can be proud of how we kept our students safe, and educated them to the best of our abilities. There was, however, a feeling of when was the dam going to break and we would see a large number of positive cases. Thankfully the dam held!

Upon hearing this fall of positive COVID-19 cases in Loup City, and specifically Loup City Public Schools, we took action that was consistent with the last Directed Health Measure (DHM) that went in effect on or around May 1, 2021, but has since been allowed to expire. That DHM stated that students who were considered a close contact to a positive COVID-19 person could come to school, wear a mask, self-monitor for any symptoms, and keep social distanced. The only change we made was recommending masks, rather than mandating them to be worn.

The situation is changing though. On Tuesday, August 31, the school became aware of a second Arcadia student who has tested positive for COVID-19. If we receive confirmation of a positive result for COVID-19, the school will be conducting contact tracing for those students to determine who may have been in close contact here at school. Once any students have been determined to be close contacts, the parents will be contacted, and we will strongly recommend that they wear masks, self-monitor for any symptoms, and keep social distanced.

The school will also be re-implementing some practices we did last year of being social distanced during meals by having fewer students sit at each table, social distancing (when possible) in the classrooms, and designating an "up" set of stairs and a "down" set of stairs to try and avoid student contact when passing. In addition, we will be requiring students use hand sanitizer or wash their hands at every opportunity throughout the school day.

Unfortunately, I feel the biggest hurdle we will face with this round of COVID-19 is the reluctance of some students to inform the school when they are not feeling well, and/or showing symptoms. It is of paramount importance for students and/or their parents to communicate with the school when they are not feeling well or showing symptoms. We cannot effectively educate the students if we're continually interrupted by absences due to COVID-19.

The mandating of wearing masks is not something that I want to do; but, it may happen if positive cases continue to increase. I fully understand, appreciate, and agree with the stance against mask wearing as a limitation of personal freedom. But I also see the big picture of wearing masks as a way to slow the spread and keep our doors open to the students so their education can continue. As Superintendent, the decision(s) I might make for my family might be dramatically different than the decision(s) I make for the school, because the latter decision(s) concern the health and safety of other people's children and families. Rest assured, any decision and action taken will be with the best interests of students, staff, and their families in mind.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike Williams
Superintendent