



## CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

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November 20, 2020

Lakeland Families

Tonight's update contains important updates related to current conditions in the District as well as answers to questions that we have been receiving.

Unfortunately, we were notified of two additional COVID contact cases in the Lakeland Central School District. Three other cases were reported as well, but had been quarantining and were not in contact with other staff or students.

We were informed that a COVID positive student case had been identified at Lakeland High School who was in contact with staff and students. Contact tracing was completed and students and staff exited the building as soon as they were identified as contacts.

Based on the total number of cases, as well as the frequency of new positives, the regional case rates, and the overlapping quarantining of staff and students alike, our district physician recommended that we transition LHS to remote learning from **Monday, November 23 through December 4**. Students and staff who must quarantine due to contact have been notified.

In addition to the Lakeland High School contact, a Benjamin Franklin Elementary School student was reported as having tested COVID positive. Contact tracing was completed and students and staff exited the building as soon as they were identified as contacts. The class which included the COVID positive case will be on remote instruction Monday and

Tuesday and will return Monday the 30. All other staff and students will return for hybrid instruction on Monday, November 23.

Please note that on any occasion, if you are asked to quarantine, you should remain at home and avoid contact with anyone for the length of the quarantine. Here is a link to the NYS quarantine guidelines [Interim Containment Guidance](#).

### **When a positive COVID case is confirmed, how are contacts determined and reported to the DOH? Who has to quarantine?**

Two factors inform our response to COVID-19 infections. They include symptom presentation and test date. The day that either COVID symptoms manifest or that a swab sample is taken is the date we count back from for contact tracing. When we have confirmation that the individual is positive, we count back 48 hours from the onset of symptoms or testing and trace every contact from 48 hours back until present.

#### **Example A:**

A B cohort student shows symptoms on Friday; her parent keeps her out of school and gets a test on Saturday from her pediatrician. On Tuesday the following week, the results come back as positive. That student, following district guidelines, has now been quarantining since Friday and has not been in attendance since the last B cohort day, a Tuesday. Since symptoms presented on Friday, we would contact trace if she had been in school on Thursday or Wednesday. Since we are using a Hybrid Model and Flex Wednesdays, she was not in contact during this period. No contact tracing is required.

#### **Example B:**

Another student in the B cohort, a high school student who plays a sport which has been practicing, gets tested the day that they find out that their father is COVID positive. The student has not shown any symptoms and feels fine, but his mother takes him to Urgent Care and gets a rapid test that day, a Flex Wednesday. The rapid test comes back positive. For the 48 hours prior, he attended school Tuesday and practiced with the Team Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before going for testing. We would contact trace for all persons he encountered Monday through Wednesday.

Contacts are defined as those who may have been within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more, or who were in the same room for about one class period or more. For a student like this, we would have perhaps 5 teachers, a lunch Monitor, one Coach, the entire team of 20

athletes, and perhaps 50 classmates. Of the 77 on the contact list all would quarantine from the last contact, in this case a Monday, Tuesday, or a Wednesday of that week.

#### Example C:

The High School student above has a sister, also cohort B, She goes with her mother and brother to the same urgent care. She has no symptoms, her test comes back negative. A second test comes back negative. She continues to quarantine according to guidelines. No contact tracing is done for the staff and students she was near. These staff and students are considered to be “contacts of contacts” and are not required to quarantine.

**How is the decision made to stay in hybrid or go remote when a positive case occurs in a school?** There are two primary factors that are involved in this decision. First, can the required contact tracing take place prior to the opening of school? The ability to do so varies greatly on the time of day and/or day of the week that we receive the report of a positive case, as well as the number of students and staff who need to be contacted. Second, can we adequately staff the building due to the number of adults involved? Again, this varies greatly with each scenario. District Covid Coordinator, Dr. Rappleyea, District Physician, Dr. Corsaro, Nursing Supervisor, Ms. Guyett, and the building principal all play a role in this conversation and help to inform the decision. Ultimately, I make the final decision. Our building administrators, nurses, clerical staff and other support staff have done incredible work in doing everything they can to keep our buildings open for students.

#### **Micro-clusters and zone designations: What do they mean for Lakeland?**

Recently New York State has begun implementing a COVID-19 Micro-cluster initiative. Using the metaphor of COVID-19 outbreaks as fire, the idea is to stamp out the embers before they create large fires. These embers, or micro-clusters, are zip code sized significant upticks in COVID-19 cases. In order for a school to open under a COVID-19 Micro-cluster Yellow-zone, we must have a plan in place to test groups of students and staff who are in person at any school within a designated area. We have nearly completed our contingency planning for the possibility of a school in our district being designated as a yellow zone school. This requires us to have a plan for testing on site. While we will be ready to implement this plan, there will be significant obstacles to implementation that are currently out of our control.

1. Once notified that we are in a “Yellow Zone” we do not have clarity on how long it will take the state to provide us with the tests we request. We have been told we cannot order tests ahead of a declaration of Yellow-Zone status
2. We have received conflicting information about what tests are acceptable. If we are required to use a lab for PCR testing, we have been given prices between \$50 and

\$200. For a school the size of one of our High Schools, the cost would be between \$42,500 and \$170,000 to complete testing of all of one building's in-person staff and students.

3. With numerous changes being implemented over the past several weeks, it is possible that our plan could be obsolete before we are in a position to implement it.

Although we will have a testing plan in place for Lakeland, we are gravely concerned about the ability of the state and local health departments to support such a plan, the inconsistent guidance that we are being provided, the logistical and financial factors surrounding such a plan, and the real questions surrounding our schools performing such a function as viral testing for students and staff.

Therefore, if portions of the district or the district as a whole are designated as being part of a yellow zone, we will switch to a fully remote learning model. As this could happen at any time in the coming days, weeks or months families should be prepared to do so on short notice.

After assessing the conditions in our community, consulting with our district physician and Board of Education, and examining the viability of implementing our COVID testing plan, we will make a determination regarding remaining in fully remote learning or attempting to return under state testing guidelines.

I hope that you and your families are maintaining good health and doing well. It is always beneficial to stop and reflect on what we are grateful for, but it is especially important during trying times. I am of course personally thankful for my family and my health, but I am also thankful to be part of the Lakeland community. I am thankful for our supportive families, our incredible students, and our amazing and hardworking administration, faculty and staff.

Thanksgiving wishes.

Brendan Lyons, Ed.D.  
Superintendent