

COVID-19 Report and Discussion

As of Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Outbreak in the High School

On Monday, October 26, two teachers tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. By Tuesday, it was apparent that the virus had spread to three other staff members. All were sent home by Tuesday afternoon.

Also Tuesday afternoon, two students also tested positive for COVID-19. Both had been attending social activities outside of school. Several dozen students, grades 5 through 12, were attending those same events. Of course, masks were not worn, so all of those students were sent into quarantine. Some were more than exposed, a couple more of those later tested positive. So, the virus was not spreading among students within our school building during the day. It was spreading among students outside of school, and the students were bringing the virus in from their outside activities.

By Wednesday, October 28, five students and five staff were positive for COVID-19 with approximately 60 students quarantined due to exposure. I made the decision to move our 7-12 building to online instruction for one week, starting Friday, October 30, and running through Thursday, November 5. We were simply trying to create separation and contain the spread. We were working directly with Wright County Public Health throughout our decision process. Public Health came to the school on Monday, November 2, to test all our faculty and staff.

I decided to leave the PK-6 elementary building in operation. The exposures in that building remained very limited. We had adequate staff in our elementary. Moreover, we understand what a burden it is for our working families to suddenly pay for a week of child care.

By Thursday, November 5, a total of five *additional* secondary students and five *additional* staff members had tested positive for COVID-19.

Area Positivity Rates are Hot Right Now

As of Tuesday, November 17, the 14-day positivity rate for COVID-19 in Wright County had reached 20 percent. This is the measure by which schools should decide whether or not to hold classes in school.

Iowa numbers are rapidly increasing and threatening to overwhelm rural hospitals. Particularly hot right now is North Central Iowa. Area counties see the following positivity rates:

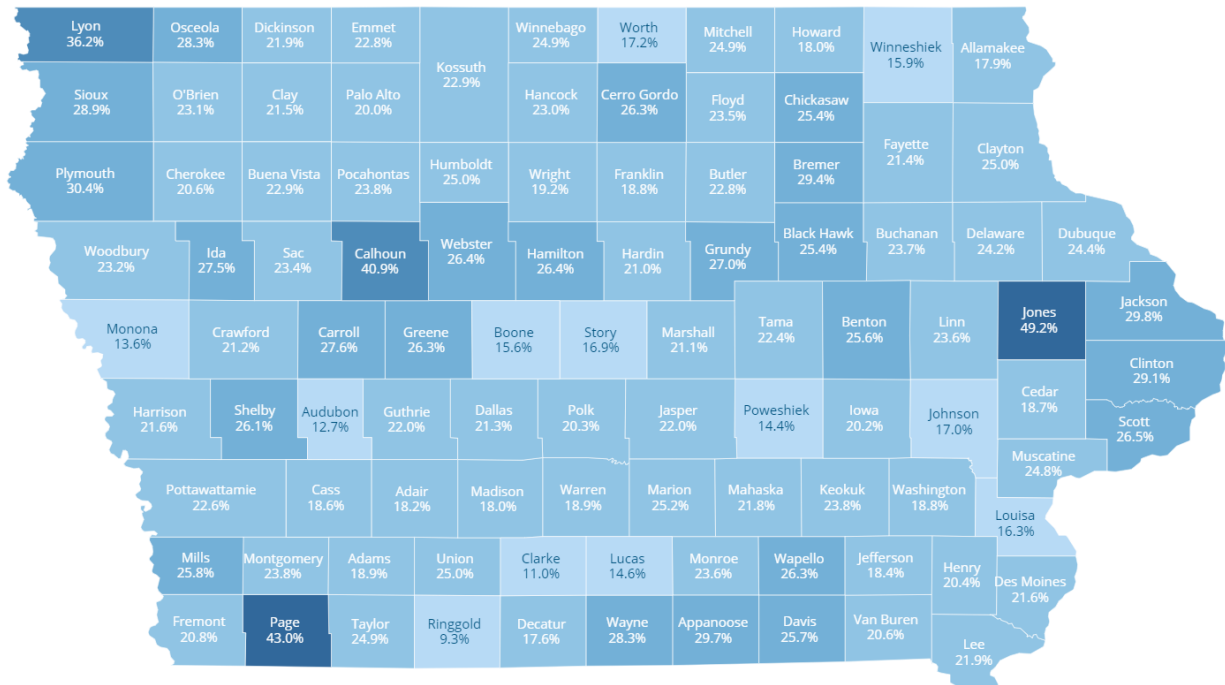
Kossuth	23%	Winnebago	25%	Worth	17%
Humboldt	25%	Hancock	23%	Cerro Gordo	26%
Webster	26%	Wright	19%	Franklin	19%
		Hamilton	26%	Hardin	21%

Current Positivity Rate

As of Tuesday, November 17, 2020, . . .

COVID-19 in IOWA

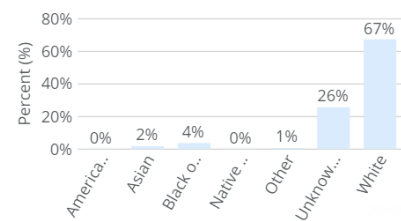
% Positive (Past 14 Day Average) by County



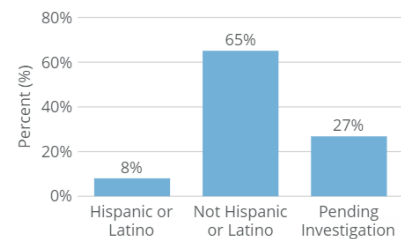
Wright County Infection Rate

County	Positive Cases	Cases Per 100,000 Population
Buena Vista	2,742	13,797
Plymouth	2,403	9,576
Crawford	1,614	9,407
Sioux	3,271	9,370
Calhoun	892	9,197
Woodbury	9,311	9,080
Jones	1,869	9,010
Carroll	1,740	8,634
Wright	1,044	8,227
Webster	2,976	8,204
Dubuque	7,936	8,194
Tama	1,358	8,034
O'Brien	1,105	7,984
Henry	1,561	7,779
Marshall	3,037	7,596
Winnebago	779	7,406
Osceola	445	7,368
Delaware	1,220	7,147
Sac	687	7,069
Black Hawk	9,308	7,030
Pocahontas	463	6,869

Positive Cases by Race



Positive Cases by Ethnicity



Absence Rates Remain Low

However, this climbing county rate does not appear to be affecting our school attendance. Here at BK as of last Friday, October 9, our absence rate was 2% sick at the elementary school and 3% sick at the secondary school.

School Outbreaks Often Tied to Adults

The Centers for Disease Control reported on October 2 that children aged 5–11 years were approximately half as likely to transmit the COVID-19 virus as adolescents aged 12–17 years.

A similar finding was reflected by the World Health Organization (WHO). A report on October 21 by the WHO suggests that children under the age of ten are less susceptible and less infectious than older ones. Other findings include

- More outbreaks were reported in secondary/high schools than in primary/elementary schools.
- In most COVID-19 cases reported in children, infection was acquired at home.
- In school outbreaks, it was more likely that virus was introduced by adult personnel.
- Transmission staff-to-staff was most common. Transmission among staff and students was less common, and student-to-student spread more rare.

The WHO study went on to observe that schools contribute little to the spread of COVID-19 in communities. Early modelling studies suggested that closing schools reduced community transmission less than other social distancing interventions.

Veterans' Day

We were forced to cancel our formal celebration of Veterans' Day as the previous week was our time to develop and record the performances we had planned. We did not have sufficient time to prepare before the holiday. We took time in both our buildings to recognize the day.

One-act Play Performances

Rather than doing a big, all-school play production this fall, we opted for several small one-act plays that could be rehearsed and performed in small groups. November 6-7 was to be our performances of the fall one-act plays. Our move to online-only instruction made the performances impossible.

With our current high rate of infection in the county, we instead plan to film and pre-record all six plays. They will be loaded online and available to everyone for streaming.

They will be available in a couple of weeks (around Thanksgiving) to be streamed through a site called *Broadway on Demand*. We have to do it through there since they are licensed works and not just something we created. Plus, we can purchase the rights to stream straight from the same place we purchased the shows in the first place.

State-wide Infection Rate

On Tuesday, November 17, when this report was written, Iowa reported a record number of new COVID-19 deaths. At 10 a.m. Tuesday, the state reported 2,024 COVID-19-related deaths, an increase of 33 deaths since the state's tally at 10 a.m. Monday, according to the state's Coronavirus.Iowa.gov website. Iowa surpassed 2,000 deaths late Monday.

Also Tuesday, the state reported that there are 190,583 confirmed cases of coronavirus, an increase of 3,563 in one day—since 10 a.m. Monday.

On Monday, 1,510 people were hospitalized in Iowa, up from 1,392 on Sunday. Also, there were 288 patients in the ICU, up from 271 the day prior. There were 130 patients on ventilators, up from 123 the day prior.

Governor Reynolds November 16 Proclamation

In Monday evening's public address, Gov. Reynolds extended existing public health measures through December 10 (includes virtual public meetings, licensure flexibility for substitutes, 50% of learning in person unless there is a waiver from DE for two weeks, etc.).

Gov. Reynolds also imposed new measures limiting the size of indoor and outdoor gatherings and requiring masks when social distancing isn't possible, but these additional measures do not apply to schools.

School districts still maintain local control to mandate masks and other social distancing requirements.

The only new measures that directly impact schools involve activities:

- ❖ Sporting and Recreational Events: Youth and adult group sporting and recreational gathering are prohibited except for high school, college, and professional sports.
- ❖ High School Sports & Extracurriculars: Sporting, recreational, and extracurricular events. Only two spectators permitted for each high school athlete, performer or competitor, and must wear a mask and maintain six feet distance from other spectators. Students can be closer than six feet and are not required to wear masks.

Here's a link to the Iowa Department of Public Health summary of the new requirements:

https://governor.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Summary%20of%20Enhanced%20Public%20Health%20Measures_final.pdf

Governor Reynolds November 10 Proclamation

On Wednesday of the previous week, Governor Reynolds signed a proclamation that restricted winter sporting events to no more than two spectators for each athlete participating in the contest. The proclamation also mandated masks and social distancing for each spectator.

Concerns for Elementary Music Programs

Singing has the potential to enhance the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As people sing out, breath and respiratory droplets are spread. This school year so far, our elementary music program has emphasized rhythm, rhythmic dance, and playing instruments.

With the increasing rates of virus infection and the limitations on crowds, we are cancelling our elementary winter concerts this season. We plan to announce this cancellation with the following statement:

“Due to the significant limitations on practicing and performing vocal music as set by the Iowa High School Music Association, the scheduled music concerts of Jacobson Elementary for the fall semester will not be held. We hope to have one concert for each grade level in the spring as conditions allow. If we are able to do so safely, the concert schedules will be placed on the activity calendar and shared with all parents and students. Your patience and support in these difficult times is much appreciated. Music is and always will be a vital part of our curriculum at Jacobson Elementary and we hope to share our students’ skills with the community in the near future.”

Basketball Season Soon Opens

Junior high boys basketball opened their home season on Monday, November 9. The varsity seasons for both boys and girls basketball open Tuesday, December 1, at home against Bishop Garrigan. We had some difficulty with other schools during volleyball season regarding their approach to COVID-19. I suggest we think about how we want to handle our approach to the virus during the upcoming basketball seasons.

Concern with Visiting Teams

I understand many people believe mask wearing is a personal choice, but I disagree that people do not have to be respectful of the wishes of their hosts. Respecting a host is a vital courtesy and simply proper manners.

During junior high volleyball this fall, we had a visiting team arrive in the Jacobson gymnasium, and neither the players nor the coaches were wearing masks.

When Lake Mills was playing varsity volleyball in our high school gymnasium, their players refused to wear masks. Their junior varsity players were quite difficult during the varsity game and even mocked our administration who asked them to wear masks.

Should we accept into our buildings the visiting athletic teams who are unwilling to follow our host school virus mitigation practices?

Concern for Traveling Teams

Some conference schools are experiencing high positivity rates, but they also do not require masks or concern themselves with other mitigation practices.

Things may be changing as a result of Governor Reynolds latest proclamation.

Are we endangering our student-athletes, our community, and our ability to continue to hold school by sending our teams and fans to away games at schools that do not follow mitigation protocols and also have high infection rates?

CONFIDENTIAL under HIPAA

The federal law called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, more commonly known as HIPAA, contains a Privacy Rule. The Rule protects the medical records and personal health information of individuals. The Rule requires appropriate safeguards to protect the privacy of personal health information. This Rule applies to students and staff here at our school.