



October 30, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

With Halloween this weekend, and the likelihood of social gatherings centered around the holiday, Waukesha County Public Health and Human Services are asking for your help keeping schools open by promoting responsible, safe celebrations that will not spread COVID-19 in the community.

School districts across Waukesha County worked closely with Public Health all summer long to safely open for students in the fall. Now that cases are rising, we need to work together to stop that from impacting students' access to education.

Celebrate Halloween with Safer Activities

This Halloween, we ask you to also consider modifying some traditional activities to protect the safety of the community while participating in the holiday. For example, consider participating in one-way trick-or-treating, where individual candies are lined up so they can be grabbed while still social distancing. Costume parties, and other activities should be moved outdoors, where protective masks are used and people can remain socially distanced. A full list of guidelines for safe Halloween celebrations are available here.

There are some high-risk activities that all families need to avoid immediately to stop the spread of the virus. Sleepovers have been one of the biggest drivers of COVID-19 cases coming into Waukesha County schools, and are one of the highest-risk social activities for kids to participate in. Please avoid all activities, like sleepovers, that bring others together in indoor spaces for long periods of time, especially if mask wearing and social distancing cannot be enforced.

Social time, recreation, and opportunities to celebrate are very important for families to connect and for children's social development. There are many ways to reduce the risk of these activities, and right now it's more important than ever that we all work together to take those precautions.

Transmission is Coming from Outside of School Activities

Currently, there have been minimal cases of known transmission within Waukesha County schools. This means that even when a person with COVID-19 has been in a school, there are very few examples of the virus being spread to another person in a classroom or other school activities. Instead, the cases that have occurred in schools have largely been the result of transmission outside of the school buildings, like sleepovers, birthday parties, and the types of social events that will be occurring over the Halloween weekend.

Any students and staff who are exposed to COVID-19 need to quarantine for 14 days, which means that anyone who comes to school as a positive COVID-19 case could impact an entire classroom. These exposures, rather than in-school transmission, are the main reason Waukesha County schools have had to move from in-person to virtual and hybrid options.



What Your School and Waukesha County Public Health is Doing

Schools in Waukesha County worked with Public Health to develop extensive COVID-19 mitigation plans. These efforts were developed utilizing best practice guidance from numerous sources such as the CDC, WEDC, DHS, and DPI. They include but are not limited to:

- Universal wearing of face coverings
- Social distancing whenever possible, indoors and outside
- Aggressive hand hygiene and cleaning
- Efficient contact tracing and strict adherence to quarantine protocols when close contacts are identified
- Creative solutions when mitigation efforts are difficult (i.e. recess, lunch, activities, transportation)
- Environmental quality (ex. air exchange, filters, etc.)

Waukesha County has also undertaken extensive efforts to stop the spread of the virus in the community. You can learn about their four-pronged approach here.

These efforts appear to be working inside of schools, which is why we need your help ensure the virus doesn't spread to our schools from outside activities.

Be A Leader in Your Community

You can be a leader in the community by ensuring that safety precautions do not stop at the end of the school day.

If our communities cannot slow the spread of COVID-19, our schools' ability to sustain a face-to-face learning environment is at risk. The greater the number of cases within the community, the greater the likelihood of transmission within the schools. The greater the transmission in schools, the greater our operational challenges become. The greater the operational challenges, the greater the likelihood of transition to a virtual learning environment.

Stay Safe to Stay Open

As we continue to work with Waukesha County through our Stay Safe to Stay Open partnership we ask that you too partner with us. We recognize the importance of in-person instruction, but we also know it will take effort on all our parts to keep it that way.

It is with the goal of keeping our schools open that we encourage not only you as parents/guardians, but also all citizens, businesses, organizations, and leaders follow CDC best practice guidance that has been shown to be effective in slowing the rise of COVID19 cases. These actions include:

- Wearing a face covering / mask when in public places
- Practicing social distancing of at least 6' from non-immediate family members
- Washing / sanitizing hands frequently
- Avoiding unnecessary in-person gatherings. If you must attend a gathering, utilize the other best practice actions
- Stay home if you are sick

Our students and their education represent the future of our communities. Your actions inside and outside of school will impact the ability for schools to stay open. Thank you for doing your part.



Paul Farrow
Waukesha County Executive



Benjamin Jones, MPH
Waukesha County Health Officer