Dec. 15, 2020

A Message from the COVID Safety Team

Dear staff,

As part of our ongoing work to keep you informed about COVID safety practices and protocols we will be sharing regular updates. Each update will include the latest information from local and regional agencies as well as stories and resources within our district.

Bellingham Public Schools links
- BPS COVID-19 dashboard
- Human resources info for staff re: COVID-19, including FAQ, safety protocols
- Dr. Baker Q&A video for staff Dec. 8 (watch for a new one this week!)

Washington state updates
- Governor Inslee extended the Stay Home - Stay Healthy proclamation to Jan. 4, 2021.
- COVID-19 Travel Advisory advises against non-essential travel and recommends a 14-day self-quarantine for anyone arriving to Washington from another state, including Washington residents.
- COVID-19 State-Wide Restrictions prohibits indoor social gatherings with people from outside your household and limits in-person services and activities. Limiting in-person activities does not apply to K-12 education and child care.

Whatcom County data and updates
Whatcom County continues to have an increasing trajectory of COVID-19 cases. Recent cases have been mainly linked to the Thanksgiving holiday and informal gatherings that cross households.
- Whatcom County Health Department Data Dashboard
- If you want to learn more about the data, read this COVID-19 Data Dashboard Explainer.
- Learn about COVID-19 vocabulary from the Whatcom County Health Department

Last week's newsletter included the following tabletop exercise question: Two students met for an afternoon at a local park. They played outside, wore masks, and sat and chatted on a park bench together for about an hour. That night, one of the two students didn't feel well. The ill child went and got a COVID-19 test, which was returned positive. What would the second child be asked to do and why?

Thanks to all who submitted answers. **The correct answer is the second child would be asked to quarantine for 14 days because they have been exposed and are a close contact.**

Q&A with our COVID safety team
What happens at school when a student is sick or reports being sick? Students and staff with symptoms of illness need to stay home for 10 days from symptom onset OR until they have

received a negative COVID-19 test AND they have been fever free for 24 hours AND their symptoms are improving.

Why 10 days? The only certain way to rule out COVID-19 is through a test; so, we must treat every illness like it is COVID-19 until we know it is not. There may be times that students or staff are able to return to school in less than 10 days and without a test. The school nurse will make this decision using Washington DOH guidance and by assessing underlying conditions, the student's symptoms, duration of symptoms, and history of testing.

What happens when a student/staff is quarantined for being a close contact? Students or staff must begin quarantine upon learning they are a close contact. Their 14 days starts after their last exposure to a positive COVID-19 case. While the CDC and the Washington DOH have provided some updated quarantine guidance, our local health department continues to require a 14-day quarantine. Receiving a negative COVID-19 test during the 14-day quarantine does not change the need to quarantine a full 14 days.

What happens when a student/staff tests positive for COVID-19? Students or staff can return to school/work if it has been at least 10 days after the onset of their symptoms AND they have been fever free for 24 hours AND their symptoms are improving.

Tabletop exercise for the week of Dec. 14:

Two siblings live together, Jordan and Taylor. Taylor started feeling sick Dec. 2 and received a positive COVID-19 test on Dec. 3. Taylor has not had a fever and symptoms are improving. Jordan continues to live in the house with Taylor during their illness.
- When can Taylor return to school?
- Jordan will begin quarantining when Taylor gets their results. When does Jordan's 14-day clock start?
- When can Jordan return to school?

Want to accept our challenge? You can test your COVID knowledge and send responses to BPS.health@bellinghamschools.org by Dec. 18.

See you in 2021!