



HEALTH UPDATE: JANUARY 27, 2021

Dear OLSS Families,

As of today, January 27, the current positivity rate in Calvert County is 7.04%. The Health Department has stated that COVID-19 is widespread in the community at this time, meaning any movement within the community is a risk for contracting the virus. Unfortunately, we are seeing this to be true within our own OLSS community. At this time, we are seeing many family members with exposures to COVID, COVID-like illness, and we have had a couple positive cases within the school. We also currently have two classrooms in quarantine awaiting test results. **It is of utmost importance to be sure we are all taking the precautions needed to keep our community safe. Each family's actions directly affect our school community.** Please be vigilant in your choices, remember to wear your masks and wash hands, and keep social distancing in mind. Working together as a community, practicing transparency, and maintaining precautions is our best defense at being able to keep our school doors open for in school learning the remainder of the school year.

Recently, we have had several situations where false information is circulating within the school. It is important to discuss with your children the importance of not spreading false health information amongst their peers. This causes confusion and can spread false fears amongst students, staff, and families. I want all families to know, that if you or your family has been considered a close contact of an individual within the school that has a COVID-like illness OR has tested positive for COVID you WILL receive an email directly from the school nurse identifying your family as a COVID exposure along with a letter from the health department. IF you have NOT received one of these letters, you are not considered a close contact. If you or your student feels they may have had a situation where they are a close contact or a classmate is a close contact, please DO NOT reach out to that student or their family directly. Please reach out to the school nurse so she can assess the exposure, identify if it is a close contact, and then update the family on proper steps to take from there. We also must report this information to the health department, so it is crucial that families are communicating with the school nurse directly and not amongst families. There have been times where the school nurse is not aware of situations that occur outside of school, and we do want you to report this information to the school nurse so we can handle the situation properly to maintain the safety of the staff and students. You may contact me by email to schoolnurse@olss.org, or by calling the school office at (410) 326-3171.

To clarify the definition of close contact within the school, a student must be within 6 feet for longer than 15 minutes to a student or staff member who has exhibited COVID-like illness OR who has tested positive for COVID. There are times where classes may shut down due to illness occurring at school. This mostly occurs in the younger classrooms where students are not at a developmental age to maintain strict precautions all the time. We must wait to determine the ill person's results, and then if negative, the students can return to school. The older student's classrooms will remain open even if an ill child is identified as long as they are maintaining 6 feet distance and proper masking and/or barriers. If there are any students identified that sit closer than 6 feet to a COVID-like illness or a positive case, they will receive a notice identifying them as a close contact. We have the students spaced out as best we can in each classroom, but unfortunately, there are some situations where a student may have to quarantine if an illness occurs. As you can see, there are very specific criteria that must be met to be considered a close contact, this makes it very important to communicate any concerns of exposure directly with the school nurse.

I want OLSS families to know we are complying with all precautions advised by the Calvert County Health Department, and OLSS has maintained even stricter precautions in some instances to ensure the safety of both staff and students. At this time, despite the increase in numbers in the community, we are seeing our precautions working and preventing the spread of the virus within the school. Please continue to work with us to help keep our school doors open, and please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions or concerns during this time.

Sincerely,

Brandi Hutchins
OLSS School Nurse