

“Do it for our kids”: Local School Superintendents Ask for Community's Help

By Kitty Mayo

In a letter to the community dated October 8th, superintendents from 30 school districts across northeastern Minnesota joined in sending an appeal for everyone to tighten up their virus precautions.

The letter states that the MDH has said most Covid-19 transmission is happening outside of schools. Instead transmission is primarily occurring in community settings and at family and social gatherings.

It goes on to ask everyone in the community to do their part to slow virus spread so that schools can stay open:

“We want our kids in school as much as possible. You, the great people in our communities, have said you also want our kids in school. We know of only one way that gives us the best chance at safely keeping our kids in school, sports, and activities. We need your help.”

- Avoid crowds.
- Keep family and social gatherings outdoors.
- Stay 6 feet from others.
- Wear a mask.

- Wash your hands.
- Stay home when sick.

The letter is signed “Do it for our kids.”, followed by signatures of superintendents from Lake Superior School District, to Ely, International Falls, Hibbing and more.

In Lake Superior School District, where some in-person classes are being held in conjunction with distance learning, a recent Covid-19 incident has caused the William Kelley High School in Silver Bay to close in-person classes for two weeks.

At presstime the total number of positive cases so far in LSSD schools was 13, including staff and students. Eight of those cases were at Two Harbors High School, one at Minnehaha Elementary, and four at William Kelley in Silver Bay.

Earlier in the year one case had been confirmed at William Kelley. Last week two more cases were added at WKHS, and because of the need to quarantine at least 53 close contacts from those cases, the decision was made to move all 150 high school students to distance learning through Novem-

ber 9th.

LSSD Acting Superintendent Jay Belcastro says that weekly meetings with public health has been an essential component of handling virus mitigation in the schools. With guidance from the MDH and MDE the schools cooperate with public health to do case investigation and contact tracing with each confirmed Covid-19 case.

“All-in-all we’ve been fortunate,” said Belcastro, “When the school year started we hoped to have at least two weeks of some in-person classes so the kids could really understand the google classroom, what would be required for distance learning, and how to access that, and now we are nearly through the first quarter,” said Belcastro.

Belcastro credits the ability to maintain at least some in-person teaching under a hybrid model to the excellent understanding teachers and students have demonstrated with mask compliance and social distancing.

However, Belcastro admitted frustration that education is being disrupted due to virus

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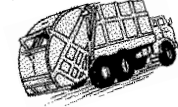
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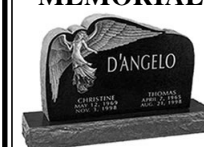
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