



## OAK PARK and RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL

Jan. 11, 2022

Dear OPRFHS Families,

I want to provide an update on the current situation at OPRFHS and why we are able to remain open right now. As I noted in my communication last week, however, this is a day-to-day decision, and we will notify you as soon as possible if anything changes.

We know that when provided safely, in-person learning is the best option for students' mental health and academic learning. The state continues to strongly encourage schools to remain in person as long as mitigations are being implemented and staffing allows them to be. Below, please find some COVID-related updates meant to help explain our current context for continuing with in-person learning.

### **Our absence rate is manageable**

The student absence rate has been higher than normal. Typically, our daily attendance rate is around 93%, while for the past week it has been around 84%. However, the majority of these absences are not directly COVID-related. Of the roughly 500 student absences each day last week, about 170 were due to COVID, while the rest were for other reasons. (To stay updated on our weekly COVID numbers, visit our [COVID-19 dashboard](#).)

We have been in close communication with the Oak Park Department of Public Health about our numbers. The health department has maintained its previous direction that if we are able to maintain our mitigations and staff our building, staying in-person is the preferred route. At this point, we are optimistic about being able to continue adequately staffing our operations. Last week we needed an average of about 40 subs per day, and we were able to cover all classes. So far this week, our need for subs has declined a bit, plus we've found more available subs.

### **We've eased some burdens within the system**

Several new operational changes are helping us to mitigate the spread of COVID. These include:

- **Hiring additional COVID Team members.** Contact tracing is an essential mitigation, and we've expanded our team as the need for tracing has increased.
- **Streamlining our notification process.** Beginning tomorrow, we will have newly automated several parts of our notification process, so that employees and families will receive faster notification that they need to isolate or quarantine.
- **Reopening the South Cafeteria.** With construction completed, our renovated South Cafeteria is open again, providing more seating capacity and better ventilation than the temporary lunch location in

the 1 West Gym. We also are continuing to keep the 1 East Gym as a lunch location for those who wish to social distance.

### **We have a new form to complete if your child tests positive**

To expedite contact tracing and ensure your child receives timely information for keeping up with their classes, we've automated our communication process. **Families are required to complete [this form](#) as quickly as possible if your student tests positive.** This will reduce the number of emails to our team and allow a contact tracer from the OPRFHS COVID Team to follow up more quickly by phone with additional instructions.

### **We've expanded remote access for symptomatic students awaiting COVID test results**

Due to the current challenges with obtaining a PCR or proctored rapid test for COVID-19, we are temporarily changing our attendance practices, effective tomorrow through January 31.

We want students to stay home and get tested if they're sick with any symptoms of COVID, no matter how mild. These symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

As long as you are actively seeking testing for a child who has COVID-like symptoms, we are allowing them to access their classes via Zoom or Google Meet during their assigned class periods. Students may return to school after 10 days, with the first day of symptoms counting as day 0. Students *may* return sooner than 10 days *if* a negative, proctored PCR or rapid test or a physician's clearance letter is uploaded to [the Proof of a Negative COVID Test form](#). (For questions about the new CDC guidance that reduces isolation periods from 10 to 5 days, please see the next heading in this letter.)

To report an absence for a child awaiting test COVID-19 results, please scroll down and follow the instructions at the end of this letter.\* We will reevaluate these temporary attendance practices at the end of January to determine next steps.

### **We expect changes in the isolation/quarantine requirement**

As you likely know, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently reduced the length of isolation and quarantine for those who test positive for COVID-19 or who are close contacts to a positive case. While the Illinois Department of Public Health has endorsed this recommendation and said that it applies to schools, we still need state guidance about how to implement the recommendations. We expect to receive this information at any moment. Until we receive those specifics from the state, however, the length of isolation and quarantine remains 10 days for students and employees. We will get information out to you as soon as possible about any changes to these guidelines.

### **We're hosting a booster clinic this weekend**

On Saturday, Jan. 15, we're hosting a booster clinic for faculty, staff, and students. The clinic will take place in the Fieldhouse from 10:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. To sign up to receive a booster, please [click here](#). The public health

department will be adding slots as demand requires, so if you find that there are no slots available, please try again a bit later to see if more become available.

### **We remain committed to saliva testing**

Finally, a reminder that voluntary saliva testing takes place now on Thursdays only. Students in all grades can participate by going to the Auditorium at the beginning of their lunch period or after school until 4 p.m. They should be sure not to eat or drink for an hour before testing.

### **A final note on masking**

As a school community, it is critical that all of us, students, faculty, and staff properly and consistently wear masks while in the building. We have found a few instances where this has not been the case, and we have and will address them when this occurs. As always, please help by reminding your students of the importance of all of our mitigations, and as a school, know that we are doing the same.

As always, thank you for helping us to keep our learning environment as safe and healthy as possible. I want to reiterate that if we find that mitigations cannot be maintained or if faculty and staff absences are such that in-person learning is simply not possible, we may need to shift to remote instruction with little notice. As a result, I encourage all students to bring their laptops home every night, in case that shift is needed.

Thanks for taking time to go through this important, and lengthy information. As a community, we will get through this.

Sincerely,

Dr. Greg Johnson  
Superintendent

### **\*To Report an Absence for Symptomatic Students Awaiting Test Results**

Note that these absences will **not** count toward the [12-day absence limit](#) for the semester. Also, while your child is absent, they may **not** participate in or attend any athletic or extracurricular activities.

**A parent/guardian must submit the absence the night before each of the 10 days that the student will be absent.** Our Attendance staff, which needs to approve absences before teachers can see them in the system, is very backlogged; absences reported the same day may take 24 hours to process.

To report an absence, please log into your Skyward Family Access account and complete an Absence Request. (For instructions, [click here](#) if using a desktop or [click here](#) if using the Skyward mobile app.) If you have any issues logging in, please email [familyaccess@oprfrhs.org](mailto:familyaccess@oprfrhs.org) for assistance. If you have any problems submitting your absence request through Family Access, you may email the request to the attendance staff at

[attendance@oprfrhs.org](mailto:attendance@oprfrhs.org). When entering in your student's absence request you MUST choose the following option from the list of choices:

Student: **ADAM AABLE** School: **OAK PARK & RIVER FOREST HS**

\* Start Date: 01/05/2022 ☒ All Day

\* End Date: 01/05/2022

\* Reason: COVID-like SYM, Getting Tested

\* Comments:

Selecting any other option from the list of choices will not generate the correct attendance code needed to notify teachers that your student is eligible to access their classes remotely.

**You must also complete this form in order for your child to receive information about how to access their classes via Zoom/Google Meet.** (Please be aware that it may take up to 24 hours to receive this information.) The state does not allow fully remote or hybrid instruction this year, so the option to observe classes via Zoom/Meet has certain restrictions, including the following:

- Students may only observe the class. They are not allowed to participate in discussions or ask questions during class.
- To be admitted from the Zoom/Meet waiting room, students must log in within five minutes from the start of class.
- Students are not permitted to record classes.
- Observation may not be available during a particular class due to field trips, testing, etc.