October 15, 2020

Warrior Country:

I wanted to take a moment and update the community on the status of our school district as we move forward through the COVID-19 Pandemic. As you know by now, it is always my intent to keep our faculty, staff, parents, and community informed of the decisions we make as a district educationally, because they impact all stakeholders of the Canton community.

As you may or may not be aware, this week, Bradford County was identified through the COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard (<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>) as a county who has a substantial transmission rate. We reached this level of transmission because our “Incident Rate” per 100,000 residents increased from a rate of 74 residents per 100,000 in the previous seven days, to 151.2 per 100,000 residents in the most recent seven days. When your number of residents per 100,000 residents in the county is above 100, you move from a moderate transmission rate to a substantial transmission rate.

Because of the substantial transmission rate, all of the school districts across the county have to meet weekly with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH). This meeting occurs each Monday; however, due to a holiday this past Monday, we met on Tuesday. This week, we learned that 70% of the cases in the Bradford County are community cases and 30% of the cases are outbreak cases. A community case is an isolated case that cannot be connected to other cases in the county. These are what I could call a “single case.” An example of this is a person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 but is unable to determine where they “caught the virus.” An outbreak is a case that can be tied to two or more other cases at the same time at the same location. Examples of this include cases at golf courses, funerals, weddings, workplaces, etc. 70% community transmission is one of the highest community transmission rates in the state.

During this meeting, it was also determined that if we remain in the “substantial transmission” category, PDE and the DOH will recommend we move to remote learning. This is strictly a recommendation. Based on this recommendation, I contacted school districts around the Commonwealth who have “substantial transmission” (Lebanon, Centre, Union, and Montour) and they are currently planning on “staying the course” with the current instructional model. It is my expectation that we also will continue with our 5-day a week in-person model as long as we do not have any outbreaks in our school and we are able to staff our classrooms with faculty. We have taken this pandemic very seriously, and it is my opinion that the safest, most structured place our students can be throughout the day is in our buildings participating in our academic, extra-curricular, and athletic programs. I also believe being able to provide in-person instruction for our students five days a week supports our student who struggle with social, emotional, and other mental health issues.

In summary, I want the community to be aware that our intention is to continue with our current instructional model until we are unable to function as an educational institution due to lack of staff or an outbreak within the school. Finally, I would like to thank the school board for supporting our administrative team as we continue to move through this pandemic with an “uptick” in cases in the county. Stay safe, stay healthy, and please do not hesitate to reach out to us should you have any questions.

Yours in Education,

Eric Briggs

Eric Briggs, D.Ed.

Superintendent of Schools

Canton Area School District