

TRANSCRIPT of November 20, 2020 Video Message from Dr. Skertich

Hello Kahok Nation, I'm superintendent Brad Skertich.

The halfway point in the school year is almost here but it feels as if we've been in a hybrid learning setting for years not months. The stress placed on students, district employees and families has been a mental and physical drain. The holiday season can increase the stress adults and children endure in a normal year let alone a pandemic. Please keep this in mind and do not underestimate the importance of a conversation with your family and friends, even if it is just to say hello.

This week we welcomed students in grades K-4 to school four days a week. The change in the district's K-4 learning setting took additional preparations by our staff district wide. While each day is not without stress or the unknown, the excitement in students' eyes in their classes the past few days served as a reminder how important our staff are to our students' academic and social growth.

We continue to have no confirmed cases as a result of student attendance at school. However, each passing month we want to increase our transparency regarding positive COVID-19 cases as well as protect the privacy of students and staff. As of Thursday, November 19th the district had 6 staff members that tested positive for COVID-19 since November 4th. Kindergarten through 6th grade had 6 students and 7th through 12th grade had 13 students that tested positive for COVID-19 since November 4th. District mitigation strategies have been effective but let this serve as a reminder to have alternate plans in place should a building or the district need to change the current learning setting.

The district will continue to monitor the health and well-being of our staff and students to drive decisions regarding our learning setting.

After consideration and reviewing the increased numbers in our community for ages 10 to 19, the district is going to push pause on the return of 5th and 6th grade students four days a week for the remainder of the 1st semester. Our focus is to maintain the current K-4 learning setting four days a week and the 5-12 learning setting two days a week through December 22, 2020.

The district is working with the Health Department to access BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen Testing for our students and staff. The Antigen Testing will help separate COVID-19 related symptoms from seasonal illness within minutes and provide another layer of mitigation in our Return to Learning Plan. The testing will begin at Kreitner after Thanksgiving and expand to all schools for symptomatic children with parental permission over time. Please be on the lookout for electronic and paper permission slips in the days ahead.

Thanksgiving normally provides an opportunity for large family gatherings, eating more than we should and enjoying the company of loved ones. Family, food and football sums it up for many families.

I am not one to promote halting traditions, but as we navigate a pandemic, we ask that families make adjustments this year. Halloween greatly impacted our health as a district and we expect Thanksgiving may do the same if our families are not proactive. Please be safe, wear a mask, wash your hands, and social distance.

On behalf of our entire school district, I would like to wish our students, faculty and staff, families and communities, Happy Thanksgiving, don't forget to wear your purple and show your Kahok Pride!