

December 6, 2021

Dear Fairmount Families,

I hope this email finds you well and that everyone had a wonderful weekend. As you are aware, the District is working closely with the DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) on the recent uptick of COVID-19 cases at Fairmount School. This afternoon (Monday, Dec. 6), District 58 was notified that the DCHD has labeled one group of COVID-19 cases at Fairmount School as an outbreak. Upon notification of the outbreak, we immediately contacted the DCHD and began work on the next steps. Per the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), an outbreak is defined as:

As of October 1, 2021, IDPH is adopting the CSTE definition of school-associated outbreaks and, upon consultation with the CDC, extending the definition to all school-based pre-K-12 settings. As established by CSTE, a school-associated outbreak is defined as (A) "multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group"³² or (B) "at least three cases within a specified core group meeting criteria for a probable or confirmed school associated COVID-19 case with symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other; who were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting (i.e., household) outside of the school setting; and epidemiologically linked in the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity." Schools should consult with their local health department to determine if their circumstances and cases constitute a school-associated outbreak, using either of the definitions above as determined by the local health department. A school-associated COVID-19 case (confirmed or probable) is school personnel present in the school setting or who participated in a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity, including 31 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. (2021, August 6).

When the DCHD notifies schools that an outbreak has occurred, it can be retroactive and well after the fact. This is the case with the outbreak associated with Fairmount. This outbreak occurred prior to Thanksgiving. The identified outbreak took place in Ms. Swallows' third grade class. The dates of the outbreak were Nov. 19-24, 2021. The DCHD informed the District that it was deemed an outbreak since there were more than three cases in the same classroom with no known epidemiological link. The District anticipated this may occur and that is why we sent communications prior to Thanksgiving as well as offered additional testing for all students and staff.

While this does not necessarily mean the children contracted COVID-19 at Fairmount, it cannot be ruled out. Therefore, it is considered an outbreak since the epidemiological links were unable to be determined. It is important to note that the DCHD is not recommending the class, grade or school shift to remote learning. Rather, **the DCHD has informed the District it should continue with in-person instruction and its current mitigation measures**. The DCHD also recommends that we screen and test all third grade students twice per week for a minimum of 28 days or up to winter break, and continue to offer weekly onsite testing to all other students (this has and will continue to be in place at the school). Mrs. Niforatos will send a second testing letter out to all third grade families tomorrow with further instructions. Additionally, the DCHD recommended that we screen all staff members twice a week for a minimum of 28 days or up to winter break (this has and will continue to be in place at the school).

Please keep in mind that many school districts have experienced outbreaks. District 58 has also experienced previous outbreaks at Fairmount and Hillcrest School. This is common when cases increase and contact tracing is unable to identify epidemiological links. The good news is that our District has strong mitigation measures in place to combat the spread of COVID-19 at our schools, and we have been very successful at stopping the spread over the last two school years.

Please feel free to contact Principal Lisa Niforatos (lniforatos@dg58.org) or Assistant Superintendent for Special Services Jessica Stewart (jstewart@dg58.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kevin Russell
Superintendent of Schools