



# Regional School Unit No. 18

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RSU 18 Community,

In a normal year, the month of May seems like a mad dash to the finish line. Teachers and students are preparing for finals, spring NWEA, AP tests and other assessments, spring plays and concerts at every grade level, playoff runs in athletics, field days, end of year celebrations, etc. But this past week as I visited schools, it was extremely clear to me that the May mad dash is different. This year, there is the added stress of, will we get to do all these things, or what if there are cases of COVID in our schools and students must quarantine and miss these events? These are tough questions to answer, but they represent the reality we are all living with.

I was at the high school this past week speaking with a group of staff and students, and during one of the conversations a staff member said to me, "I hope COVID doesn't ruin graduation." I urge everyone to remember the stress our staff and students are dealing with every day, in all schools. No matter what your opinion of how the pandemic has been handled by the state or our district, there are more things out of our control this year during the May mad dash and that is difficult on all of us.

This weekend for example we learned of two incidents at MHS of positive cases that will cause quarantine for a group of students and cancellation of some of our athletic events. While the risk of outdoor transmission is reported by the CDC to be minimal, we still must follow the guidelines in place which do not differentiate between indoor and outdoor exposure. I have already heard from some of you regarding your frustration with the guidelines, but please know we are trying very hard to give students every opportunity we can.

In many ways we have had a great couple of weeks since vacation. Impressive things are happening around the district. I heard from numerous staff of how students thanked them during appreciation week, that is awesome. I was able to watch athletic events including a track meet at MHS. I have seen teachers in all schools continuing their creativity with lessons outside. I have enjoyed videos posted by our music program, from our livestream mastersingers to our elementary students making their own percussion instruments. On several of the playgrounds I enjoyed watching kids play together on the creative new activities that schools came up with during the pandemic, great job everyone.

But, along with the positive cases that impacted the high school, there were three other schools this past week where there was an impact from COVID-19. We are still dealing with this; it is not over. However, there were less than 250 cases in the state reported again today, so we are moving in a good direction. With most of our staff being fully vaccinated the cases in our schools have not caused shutdowns. Thank you to the staff for taking this step.

I hope everyone has a great week.

Carl Gartley  
Superintendent of Schools  
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