

8/31/2020

Timberlake Community,

I realize our current situation puts a burden on many of us as working parents and there are differing opinions on how this Covid thing should be handled. I wanted to reach out this evening to give a little clarity on what went into our decisions, and also respond to some questions that we have been receiving today and throughout the weekend.

Our Return to Learn Plan was much less restrictive than most other Oklahoma schools, due in large part to the overwhelming response from the parent survey that supported this path. We have said from the beginning that we would only respond with state department recommendations if cases and data were linked directly to Timberlake students or staff. The measures that we have taken are NOT based on state, federal, or even county numbers and they are NOT permanent. They are based on the following local numbers and our intent is to return to normal as soon as we can do so safely. The information that led to my decision was a combination of two facts that were brought to my attention on Friday:

1. A third grade student tested positive for Covid-19 on a rapid test. This test does have a significant fail rate, so a PCR test was administered immediately following and could come back negative. This would allow us to immediately loosen restrictions.
2. The final number of elementary students that missed school late last week for symptoms consistent with Covid-19, or for unknown reasons came to 21 officially.

While there are other possible explanations for these two facts, we felt it was in the best interest of everyone involved to take them seriously until more information could be gathered to rule out a potential Covid outbreak. There is no reason to panic, but we would appreciate any new information that could help us make a timely decision, whether it is positive or negative. Staff is in the process of contacting all 21 families to determine the severity and status of their illness.

The following are frequently asked questions that we hope to clarify:

*How do I access my child's school email or Odysseyware password?*

Login information has not changed since last spring. Email [tdayton@tlake.k12.ok.us](mailto:tdayton@tlake.k12.ok.us) for any login or technical issues.

*Can my student(s) still receive meals through the school's child nutrition program?*

Yes, meals will be available for pickup again at noon tomorrow (Sept. 1) at both school sites. Meals do need to be reserved by phone at (580) 626-4411 or by email at [mblackledge@tlake.k12.ok.us](mailto:mblackledge@tlake.k12.ok.us) with the preferred pickup site by 9:00 am. More convenient delivery arrangements will be made if a longer closure to in-person instruction is needed.

*Will elementary students be allowed to participate in the County Livestock Show if we are not able to return to school by Wednesday?*

4-H is not a school sponsored group and there are currently no health department ordered quarantines for our students. This decision will be left to individual parents. It is recommended

that 3rd grade parents keep in mind that a quarantine will be ordered by the health department once contact tracing begins.

*Is tomorrow's Cross Country Meet in Helena still on, and if so, do elementary students get to participate.*

The Cross Country Meet will be held tomorrow assuming no new information or weather forces us to cancel. JH/HS students will participate, but participation for Timberlake Elementary students is still up in the air. We will release updated information tomorrow afternoon with a final answer to this question.

*Will FCA Overtime continue?*

FCA Overtime will be limited to grades 7-12 for this week but students MUST go home by their normal method of transportation after school. Overtime does not begin until 6:30, so we ask that parents make arrangements for students to be dropped off NO EARLIER than 6:20. We will cancel Overtime for grades 7-8 if those students are roaming around Helena from 3:30 to 6:30.

### **Additional Updates:**

#### **Mask Procedures**

Timberlake JH/HS students and staff are currently required to wear masks in areas where social distancing is not possible. There are opportunities for masks to be removed. These include during meals, outdoor athletic activities, instruction as long as students are in individual desks and facing the same direction, and during free time around lunch as long as students stay spaced out.

Status updates tomorrow will determine how Timberlake will move forward with elementary students. There is a good chance that most if not all of our classes will be able to return to in-person classes on Wednesday. If we are able to return but feel masks are needed at the elementary for the time being, the following procedures will apply.

- Two washable masks (youth or adult sizes) will be available for EVERY Timberlake student. They will be available during route pickup or upon arrival to school. We ask that one is kept in the student's backpack, and the other at school in their locker.
- PK-2nd grade students will ONLY be asked to wear masks in school vehicles.
- 3rd-6th grade students will be required to wear masks under the same conditions as grades 7-12 are currently.

#### **Moving Forward**

Unfortunately, there is no set day and time for us to expect test results. The administration team will be meeting early tomorrow morning to go through updates on our students that have been experiencing symptoms and begin to hash out plans for the rest of the week. We will do our absolute best to share these plans by School Messenger as well as on the website by the end of school tomorrow. Please keep in mind that the PCR test result for our 3rd grade student is a big piece of the puzzle and could come in at any time. As soon as we learn this result, we will share it with everyone so 3rd grade parents especially can make arrangements for a return to

school or an extended quarantine. As we move forward, each situation will be evaluated as a separate incident and decisions will be made based on the specific facts of each situation. The decisions that we have made regarding the current situation were done due to the specific facts listed above and this will not necessarily be the response to every potential positive case. It is impossible to know what tomorrow might bring during this pandemic but we stand ready to respond immediately to whatever comes our way.

I completely realize the animosity this subject creates. Please remember, that all of this is only temporary and it is being done with the best intentions possible. While individuals may not agree with all of our decisions, I hope everyone can take a step back and continue to be supportive of our efforts and our kids. Timberlake is a great school and our community is a great place to raise a family. I hope we all realize how fortunate we are to be in this part of the country. There are very few places that we could live right now that haven't already had these or even stricter procedures in place regarding this pandemic with no end in sight. Our goal IS to provide in-person instruction with the most limited restrictions as possible as soon as we can. Please be patient and bare with us through this unfortunate time. Timberlake is experiencing decreasing enrollment and I hope everyone can stay the course. Our school will remain better for it.

Sincerely,

Kale Pierce  
Superintendent  
Timberlake Public Schools