



NEWTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

November 12, 2020

Cardinal Families:

The 2020-2021 school year continues to be one for the ages. We are quickly approaching the end of our DE-approved "Request for Temporary Continuous / Remote Learning" period. The approval was for the period of time starting on Friday, November 6, 2020 and going through the end of the day on Friday, November 13, 2020. Today, I am extremely disappointed to be telling you I will be submitting a second application to the Department of Education to extend the Temporary Continuous / Remote Learning period until the end of the school day on Wednesday, November 25, 2020. This application will be submitted today and we should receive a decision by the end of day Monday, November 16, 2020 at the latest.

Our average number of adults and students out with COVID related absences is still above averages from previous weeks. The Jasper County 14-day positivity rate is still above 20%. And there have been people who have not been able to get tested. Test Iowa has not had available appointments and was closed yesterday in observance of Veteran's Day. I will continue to monitor the data and communicate with public health officials, the Department of Education, and local healthcare to make the best decisions for our students, our families, our staff, and our community.

I understand the strain this is placing on many families. I also know each school is handling the situation differently. We are working to bring our students back. Our focus is the education of the kids and our goal remains having our kids in our classrooms. To help us reach that goal, the Newton Community School District is encouraging all of our families and students to continue practicing social distancing. Remind our students to regularly wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. And perhaps most importantly, people should remain at home if they are not feeling well or have a fever. These have consistently been identified by the CDC and the Iowa Department of Public Health as steps to help control the spread of the virus. Your assistance can make a difference in the speed at which we return to on-site learning.

Please know I have thought about this in great detail. I want to make sure our data trends are truly going in the right direction. I do not want to bring our students back when the data is not clearly supporting it. It would cause more chaos to shift back and forth between models. I prefer to make one consistent decision to help our families and community plan and prepare. I will continue to keep you informed and I will always put the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff as my highest priority.

Yours truly,

Tom Messinger