

December 16, 2020

Dear Parents,

As you know, I recently made the decision to amend my recommendation to allow in-person instruction at schools in Marion County to resume beginning January 4, 2021. This was a change to my previous announcement, requiring schools to provide only virtual instruction until January 18, 2021.

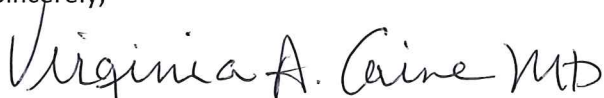
We have recently been made aware of new research studies along with federal agency recommendations which revealed that there is less risk for contracting COVID-19 infection in classrooms than general community spread. We also obtained additional Marion County school data by student age along with faculty and school staff that was not initially available to us that highlighted limited community COVID -19 spread in the schools compared to the public. We are currently reviewing this new data to develop new school guidance which should be released next month.

After my initial decision, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised its recommendations to shorten the quarantine for persons without COVID-19 symptoms to 10 days. Updated science indicates if a person showing no symptoms has COVID-19, there is a very minimal risk of infecting others that will have passed within 10 days after infection. January 4, 2021 is 10 days after Christmas. Applying this 10-day buffer to all persons after Christmas Day is an extra precaution that we recommend.

Anyone who is showing COVID-19 symptoms and knows they were in contact with another infected person, or who themselves tested positive for the virus, should not return to school until they have passed the quarantine or isolation period prescribed by CDC.

We all play an important role in protecting our children, teachers and school staff during this pandemic. Please keep wearing masks that cover the nose and mouth, practice social distancing, and wash hands frequently when out in public. Together, we can help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Now, more than ever, we must be vigilant to avoid in house gatherings with people outside our households. As difficult as this maybe during this holiday period, it is a crucial step in helping to reduce COVID-19 disease transmission.

Sincerely,



Virginia A. Caine, M.D.

Director and Chief Medical Officer

Marion County Public Health Department