



RETURN TO SCHOOL

On Tuesday, January 5th, 2021, all Tri-County schools will return to in-person instruction. In order to successfully and safely return to in-person instruction, it is imperative to maintain open communication with each building principal and/or nurse regarding COVID-19 testing and results, especially during the break.

Throughout the first semester, the communication between parents/guardians and the schools was tremendously helpful in keeping our schools open. Thank you to everyone who communicated with either a building-level administrator or school nurse on COVID-related issues. Let us not grow weary of the needed continual communication, particularly during the holiday season.

Contact information for each building is located on the newly revamped Tri-County School Corporation website, trico.k12.in.us.

COVID DATA DASHBOARD

As a corporation, it is important to continue to share data and information with you in regards to how COVID-19 is affecting the school. Knowing this, our COVID dashboard is updated regularly and can be found on our Tri-County [website](#). As you can see from the dashboard, our positive cases increased after Thanksgiving. Since Thanksgiving over $\frac{2}{3}$ (66%) of our total positive cases were reported to the school. This increase since Thanksgiving highlights the importance of following the CDC guidelines and the importance of communicating with the schools during extended breaks.

In order to help prevent another increase in cases, we are asking all of our students, staff, parents, and community members to continue to follow the CDC guidelines of physical distancing, properly wearing mask coverings, and frequent hand washing while both at school and in the community.

Also, if feeling ill for any reason, please stay home. At the guidance of the CDC and our local health departments, students considered to be a close contact need to self-isolate for the assigned specified period. Separating those who are either COVID-19 positive or who have had close contact with someone who is from others who are not sick is just another way to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our school and community.

14-DAY QUARANTINE UPDATE

Recently, the CDC offered guidance reducing the quarantine period for close contacts from 14 days to 10 days. Previously, Tri-County School announced that 10 days of quarantine would be the practice we would follow based on changes from the CDC. However, after obtaining more detailed information, Tri-County will revert back to the original 14 days of quarantine. There are several reasons for this change in policy:

1. Any persons brought back after 10 days of quarantine require symptoms monitoring on days 11-14. At the end of the first semester, Tri-County did monitor symptoms for students returning to school after 10 days, and while we managed to have successful monitoring of symptoms, it did disrupt the educational process of the morning and was difficult for each building to properly manage.
2. Student-athletes returning after just 10 days of quarantine are required to wear a face-covering in practice and competition. Once again, Tri-County did practice this guidance at the end of the 1st semester, and we felt wearing a face mask while at practice caused a different type of safety issue. Student-athletes exerting themselves while wearing face masks is not wise or safe.

DELAYS AND CANCELLATIONS

During the second semester, we know that weather delays and cancellations will likely occur. This is a reminder that the primary method of communicating delays and cancellations will be our School Messenger phone calls, emails, and texts. In order to maintain the lines of communication, it is important for each building to have updated contact information for parents/guardians.

Please be prepared to pivot to remote learning should a weather-related cancellation be called by the corporation. In the event school is canceled, remote learning will be conducted during the day. During the first semester, Tri-County did cancel school without conducting remote learning. The decision to cancel school without conducting remote learning was due to COVID, not weather-related issues.

Lastly, the Tri-County school corporation is announcing the following make-up days for the second semester.

August 28th: Corporation Closed - Make-up Day February 12, 2021 (RED Day)

October 30th: Corporation Closed - Make-up Day January 18, 2021 (BLUE Day)

November 30th: Corporation Closed - Make-up Day May 26, 2021 (RED Day)

2nd SEMESTER PREVIEW

In my most recent bible study, entitled “In the Boat in the Middle of a Lake”, in the opening devotional the disciples find themselves in the middle of a storm.

I wanted to share an excerpt from this devotional because it is fitting, *“Evening was coming and the disciples found themselves in the water instead of by the water. It was getting dark, Evening was coming. And where there is water, there are also waves. Before long the waves were threatening the very lives of the disciples.”*

In all sincerity, I hope the Christmas break was restful and relaxing. I also hope there has been time to reflect on the successful first semester. It goes without saying we are in the middle of the storm of this global pandemic. A storm that does not appear to end any time soon. The difficult part is accepting the fact we do not have control over the circumstances when in the midst of the storm.

While in the chaos of the 2020-2021 school year, we have both taught and have been taught several lessons. Some of these lessons can only be learned in the classroom. However, others are life lessons that can only be learned through doing, such as: how to be kind and gracious to others, and the power of unwavering faithfulness. This has clearly been seen, taught, and learned from the Tri-County community

as a whole. The Tri-County community's commitment to sustained success and the support of student learning continues to support Tri-County as being the best small, rural school in Indiana.

Perhaps the biggest thing I have learned this school year is the fact we are all in the storm, however, we are not all in the same boat. For our students, staff, and community, the boats in which we combat the storm vary from yachts to tugboats. In fact, some people do not have a boat and they are just drowning. Knowing the different boats while navigating the storm makes it all the more important to just be kind and patient with each other.

As we prepared to return to in-person instruction on Tuesday, January 5th, please let's not tire of being kind and patient with each other, despite the fact we are all ready to return to normalcy. Our present troubles are small and will not last very long. Yet the struggles produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs the temporary struggles we encounter currently.

Yours in Education,

Patrick Culp, Superintendent