

Dear Staff, Parents/Guardians and Students-

After significant deliberation, the school has decided not to mandate using a contact tracing app. The reason for this is as follows. First, the effectiveness of contact tracing applications is dubious. We have not seen any study which shows that these applications are reliable. Algorithms take account of physical proximity, but do not account for natural barriers. For example, a phone signal can travel through plexiglass, but the virus will be blocked. Similarly, they do not take account of what people are wearing to protect themselves, such as masks or other protective clothing. Moreover, many casual contacts will not be enough to effectuate transmission of the virus, but these apps will not differentiate between dangerous contacts and benign ones. Accordingly, they will generate many false positives, which will have a very disruptive impact on all of you when there is no real problem.

Furthermore, these apps depend on people having their phones constantly on and the applications active. However, people often leave their phones in their cars, at home, or in their bags and therefore contact data is not always accurate. In school, we do not encourage students to have their phones on during class, and in fact many teachers prefer that students shut off their phones in order to facilitate better concentration and student work.

Contact tracing, to be effective, is labor intensive. People need to evaluate the nature and type of interactions to determine if they might lead to infections. Current software applications are not yet nuanced enough to do this properly. We do not want quarantine decisions to be forced on us by these algorithms. The choice or obligation to quarantine needs to be based upon data that people are confident in,

Moreover, contact tracing inherently requires a significant invasion of privacy. You must be willing to share private information about where you have been and who you have been with. The school district does not believe that the benefits of the current state of such software merits relinquishing so much private information about our daily lives.

Finally, the school is limited in its resources. We have spent a great deal of money and funds on disinfecting classrooms, reconfiguring classrooms for social distancing, purchasing personal protective equipment for staff, and setting up and enforcing safety protocols. We believe that this is a better use of our scarce funds, and that these initiatives will be more effective at preventing the spread of the disease.

We will continue to monitor the design and effectiveness of contact tracing software as the products mature. When we believe that the applications have addressed many of the current limitations, we will review our decision. As always, we welcome your input and suggestions.

Very truly,

Your principal