

Behind the Scenes

Creek's staff members push themselves even harder to protect students during COVID-19

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TIMELY SANITIZATION: Re-Juv-Nal, the chemical teachers are using to spray down desks, is mostly composed of ammonium chloride variants which are effective cleaners. Teachers are required to spray all desks in their classroom before the next class arrives.

MAINTAINING COVID PRECAUTIONS: ABM worker Araseli works to clean the school after hours. The custodians must go up and down each row of desks, spraying and wiping them down, in addition to their

COVID-19 has impacted everyone's lives - that isn't news to anyone. Whether it be the loss of a loved one or even just the loss of our old lives, COVID-19 is something that is on our minds throughout the day. When we go to school, we see our teachers who show up in class and put themselves at risk to give us an education. But, what about the hundreds of other Creek staff members who risk coming to school every day and enable us to learn safely?

Recent data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey shows that between 42 and 51.4 percent of all school employees

across the country meet the CDC definition for being at increased risk of severe COVID-19 complications.

Even more school employees live in a household with people at high risk, according to the same survey. As schools open up and school workers go back to their jobs, there's a lot of work behind the scenes. We see our teachers, but there are so many other workers that we may not even appreciate.

Here's a few of the departments and people who work in the background every day. They have taken on the year with more work to keep everyone safe, and COVID-19 has

impacted them all in their personal and work lives.

TRANSPORTATION

When bus driver Debbie Kinemond walks into school to get the bus ready, it's almost like a normal school day, just like she has been doing for more than 20 years. But this year, Kinemond, who is also the Assistant Director of Transportation for the district, has a job that is anything but normal.

To maintain the students' safety on buses, CCSD has had to implement a new COVID-19 transportation plan.

“Capacities are now half of what they were,” Kinemond said. “We changed spacing on the buses, kids are wearing masks, drivers are wearing masks, [and] we disinfect the buses.”

Requirements for the drivers change as health department guidance changes, and bus drivers now have responsibilities that they never had in the past. This new role for the drivers can be stressful, but they are willing to adapt to the extra challenges.

“I put up with that,” Safety and Training Manager Susan Nowland said.

The additional responsibilities and added stress of working in the school transportation department during COVID-19 is in addition to the personal stress workers feel on the personal side. Nowland is one of many Americans who suffered economic stress due to family members who lost their jobs during COVID-19.

“I feel very blessed that I still have a great job,” Nowland said. “And, that I know that the district is fighting very hard to keep me and everyone else.”

The pandemic changed Nowland’s work-life significantly and it gave her more to think about personally. While she is worried about catching COVID-19 herself, she is most worried about spreading it to her elderly mother that lives with her.

“That would be my biggest fear: to bring it home,” Nowland said

MAINTENANCE AND JANITORIAL STAFF

The workers in the maintenance and janitorial staff had similar issues.

Amy Johnson, an assistant for facility/attendance, has taken a new role this year

of distributing PPE (personal protection equipment) due to COVID-19. In addition to Johnson’s usual tasks that she followed before COVID-19, she is also now responsible for making sure teachers have all the materials needed to teach in a safe environment.

Each day Johnson oversees things such as sanitizing wipes, the district approved cleaner, rubber gloves, paper towels, hand sanitizer, and proper masks are dispersed throughout the campus.

“It takes a huge portion of time to make sure that everything is coordinated and gets out to everyone that needs it,” Johnson said.

She also is a mother to an eighth grader and a junior so she has experienced COVID-19 as a parent too. Johnson sees how hard it is for her kids to adjust to learning in COVID-19.

“As parents, we just feel for you guys,” Johnson said. “[I] know that you guys are doing the best that you can.”

Other workers in these departments have also had a lot of extra work to shoulder. The maintenance and janitorial staff is usually busy, even without COVID-19, since they are in charge of cleaning the school. Now, they are responsible for a whole new operation - every room must be disinfected every evening and again every morning.

To keep up with health and safety standards, they must do extra rounds and clean more frequently. Maria D. Martinez, a custodian, explains her experience with the COVID-19 situation.

“Everything has changed - I disinfect everything including the tables and chairs,” Martinez said.

Every time she comes back from work, she has to make sure she is being careful about

not spreading COVID-19 to her husband.

“Things in my house are completely different. I have to disinfect everything when I come back from work,” Martinez said.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

This year, the administrative support staff has had to pitch in by taking on new tasks and getting creative about how to do their jobs for the school in the COVID environment.

Rosann Bryant is an Assistant to Assistant Principal Marcus McDavid. Their office oversees student field trips but that work was mostly placed on hold as COVID-19 started.

In its place, Bryant took on new tasks left behind by teachers and administrators that transferred to the Elevation School. “This is the new normal for offices across Creek that have to jump in and make sure everything still gets done,” she said.

“There’s a lot of people doing things that just don’t come up every year, but in COVID-19 - you know we’re all tapping in,” Bryant said.

Bryant also explained that all staff and administrators are “working hard to meet the extra demands of this year.”

Like all employees, Bryant’s work at Creek impacts her home life. Bryant worries about getting COVID-19 and passing it on to her 88 year old father.

“I find that I am more careful about making sure I check in on him regularly. And, that he doesn’t feel isolated during this time.”

Everyone at Creek is trying to stay safe and keep their families safe - that feeling is what school workers are striving for.

“They need to feel safe coming here,” Johnson said.

Debbie Kinemond’s Bus Driving Routine

1. Kinemond waits in line six feet from others, with her mask on, to get her temperature taken.
2. Checks in and picks up her book with route information and keys.
3. Opens up all windows for circulation and heads off to pick up and drop off kids.
4. Disinfects all of the seats.
5. Picks up the next batch of students and drops them off at school.
6. Disinfects again.
7. Drops off her keys and book and heads home.
8. Then comes back mid-day to do it again.



PHOTOS BY MADISON SECKMAN

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY: Cherry Creek bus driver Albert R. sprays and wipes down his bus before the students on his route arrive.