

11/13/2020

Good afternoon parents,

I hope this finds you well. There has been a flurry of news in the last week with regards to an increased number of COVID restrictions and travel guidelines. All indicators, whether local, regional, or national, point to the onset of a very difficult time period in terms of the COVID-19 virus. While there was some good news about a vaccine, we must continue to be mindful of the safety precautions we must all implement to reduce the threat of transmission of the virus.

The upcoming holiday travel season presents a significant challenge to the need to reduce the spread of the virus. The priorities reflected in the guidance focuses upon efforts to keep schools open, reduce the spread of COVID-19, and to allow the economy to remain open. Attention has turned towards group behaviors as many of the recent spikes in case counts have been associated with large gatherings. The presentations I have heard recently have stressed the importance of avoiding large groups and maintaining our vigilance. My understanding at the time of drafting this correspondence is that there will be further guidance on group size, holiday get togethers, travel and hosting guests in an effort to hold off the current surge in cases.

The Vermont Department of Health has information on its website ([here](#)) related to travel and quarantining. The COVID dashboard on the VDH site presents a clear picture as to the urgency of mitigating the spread of the virus. Similarly, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development ([here](#)) contains critical details as well.

Surveillance testing for staff

We heard this week that all school staff will have the opportunity to be tested. Because of the relative distribution of schools and the number of people employed, school staff are an ideal source for surveillance testing. This [Testing Letter](#) from Secretary French explains the importance and reasons for this testing. We will be administering the testing from a centralized location. While we do not anticipate any disruption, our school sites will be working with their staff in order to cover classes or duties so staff may participate.

Post Thanksgiving

We are not currently planning on any significant changes in our learning settings following the Thanksgiving or December holiday. We continue to stress the guidance on limiting travel and social gatherings. It is important to note, however, that we must maintain our ability to transition to sustained remote learning in a rapid manner. Our central office team has assessed our capacity and is working with school sites to make any necessary changes.

Please remember that parents who are quarantining due to COVID symptoms, COVID exposure, and/or non-essential travel to a restricted area may not enter the school drop off line.

Transition planning for second semester

Our Leadership team has been discussing the instructional dispositions for the start of the second semester. Over the summer, we asked parents to decide between in-person and remote learning and commit for the first semester. Because of the planning needs involved, our focus has started to shift to the second semester at this point. There are dual intentions in this planning. First and foremost is to implement the structure necessary to have in-person elementary students in school four days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday). The second is enhancing our ability to nimbly move between emergency remote situations and in-person learning. We will still be offering a separate fully remote option for our students. I can share the following progress:

- We will be following AOE guidelines for spacing of students which is a minimum of three feet for students in Kindergarten through Sixth Grade. Secondary students will maintain a minimum of six feet of spacing.
- We are striving to have elementary students attend school 4 days per week. Due to spacing guidelines, we are still reviewing all options as to next steps with our secondary students.
- WRCC is investigating students attending four days a week for trade licensure purposes.
- Parents will be surveyed in early December after greater details in programming are provided as to whether they will choose in-person or remote learning for the second semester.
- Parents will be provided with a minimum of one week to make a decision.
- Our plan is to maintain current class groupings to the greatest extent possible but is dependent upon parent demand for both remote and in-person learning.

Building Work

Guilford Center School will be fully remote the week of November 16th (next week) due to ventilation work and HVAC upgrades to the facility.

We look forward to celebrating the holidays in a safe and healthy manner while also working towards maintaining the hard work that has been accomplished in keeping our schools open. The urgency of working together, as a community, in preventing the spread of the virus is more important now than it has been in the past several months. We will continue to share information as it becomes available to us.

Thank you for your continued support and flexibility.

Andy Skarzynski
Superintendent of Schools
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