

11/20/2020

Good Afternoon Parents,

I hope this finds you well. The news in the last week has all focused on remaining vigilant in following the guidance in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and it is easy to lose sight of the great work our teachers and students are doing on a daily basis. While we must not lose sight of the fact that we are still engaged in addressing a pandemic and that these efforts are helping all of us stay safe, we need to consciously celebrate and appreciate the resilience of our educators, students, and families.

There are a few important updates to share with you this week.

ADDENDUM 8 TO AMENDED AND RESTATED EXECUTIVE ORDER 01-20

The link to Governor Scott's Executive Order can be found [here](#). The Order explains the new requirements enacted to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is worth reading in its entirety.

Second Semester Planning

Our leadership teams are working with their school sites to begin planning for the second semester. Our goal is to provide more detailed information to elementary school families the week after Thanksgiving. A feedback and commitment survey will be administered to families with a due date on or about December 11th. While we are striving to maintain our current structure, a significant change in parent demand may have an impact on how we are staffing both in-person and remote learning models.

As I wrote last week, we will also continue to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 virus. Generally, our plan is to have elementary school students attend four days a week using the three feet spacing guidance from the Department of Health and Agency of Education. Our planning will reflect the need to remain remote ready should conditions warrant a transition.

Updated Contact Tracing

The Vermont Department of Health and Agency of Education have implemented a change in practice for contact tracing and notification of families. While we must maintain confidentiality, we are also planning on providing families with information to the greatest extent possible so that students remain safe. Because schools typically have the best relationships with families, we have been asked to assist the Department of Health in sharing information families when necessary. This is primarily when there is contact within the school setting that would warrant quarantining pods, cohorts, or entire schools. It does not pertain to incidents where there was no exposure to the virus while in school. Please note the following from the Agency of Education:

Process Change for Contact Tracing: Communication with Families

The Vermont Department of Health is implementing a process change in situations where:

- there is a positive case that was at school (PreK-12) while infectious, and
- the Health Department recommendation is for the entire pod or classroom to quarantine.

In these situations, school administrators will be asked to communicate directly with teachers, staff and families of the pod or classroom to provide them with quarantine guidance. The Health Department will provide template language for these communications and detailed information on the start of quarantine (Day 0), the end of quarantine (Day 14) and Day 7 testing dates (should individuals with no symptoms choose to test out of quarantine at Day 7 or after). The Health Department will be available to answer any questions that families have about this quarantine guidance and will assist families in accessing services and supports, if needed.

The following will not change:

- Health Department-trained case investigators will continue to conduct a thorough interview with anyone who tests positive.
- A Health Department rapid response team will continue to conduct meetings with school administration to discuss infection prevention, work with them to identify close contacts to develop line lists, and make public health recommendations.
- The Health Department will be an ongoing resource for schools and families throughout the process.

The full guidelines may be found [here](#).

Letter from the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter, Vermont Academy of Family Physicians, Vermont Medical Society:

Attached to this email is a letter from the above that describes the importance of following the Governor's guidelines and the connection of those guidelines to keeping students in school.

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Letter from Brattleboro Primary Care

The following letter from Brattleboro Primary Care outlines many of the reasons why we must remain vigilant in following state guidelines related to social gatherings, travel, and maintaining safe learning environments for our students.

Dear patients and families,

As you know, COVID cases have been increasing around the state and country over the past couple of weeks, due to a significant increase in community spread. **71% of recent COVID19 cases in Vermont are due to private parties and small social gatherings.** We now need to increase our efforts to get this under control! We understand everyone is tired of managing the pandemic. We also struggle with the isolation, the loss of routines and lack of full-time school attendance. It is essential that we increase our efforts to prevent further spread of COVID19, as this could lead to full lock down and school closures, as well as place significant strain on our medical resources.

Our kids need to be in school. Our state, our schools and our teachers have done an amazing job providing safe protocols for our kids to attend school. Schools provide both education and social/emotional supports for our children, and schools are NOT the primary place children are being infected with COVID. Spread in VT schools is very low, and cases in VT schools have NOT led to any outbreaks.

Schools will only be able to stay open if we do our part to decrease the spread in our community! So moving forward, please follow the state guidelines of “Masks on Faces...6 foot spaces...Uncrowded spaces.” And as the holiday season approaches, continue to be vigilant and follow the governor’s recent restrictions about limited social gatherings.

If you do travel out of state, please do not come into the office and do not send your children to school until quarantined at home (no visitors) for 14 days or for 7 days followed by a PCR test with negative result. Keep your child home until test results are known.

Please stay home when you or your child is sick. Call our office if you have questions about symptoms or want to request evaluation or testing. Get tested if you have symptoms, and it is imperative that you stay home while awaiting the results. Take the contact tracing efforts by the department of public health seriously. Please refer to the Vermont Department of Health School attendance protocol for reference.

Thank you for the efforts that you and your families continue to make to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Vermont.

Thank you for your continued support, understanding, and cooperation. Have a wonderful weekend.

Best,

Andrew Skarzynski
Superintendent of Schools
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union