

Dear Simsbury Families:

I want to start by acknowledging the poor road conditions this morning that unfortunately caused issues for families and staff. The weather deteriorated quickly over the course of the morning and, regrettably, the time had passed to call for a school delay. Our Central Office team was in real-time communication with Salter's about bus transportation, which was temporarily halted while the highway department retreated the roads to ensure a safe school arrival. I apologize to families who faced added stress this morning. Despite these unexpected events, the good news is that all students arrived safely.

Below is a communication that was intended to go out yesterday afternoon. Due to technical issues with our website and notification system, we were unable to send the communication until this morning. You will note that it is being sent via SchoolMessenger rather than our usual eNotice system.

I want to provide information based on further updates we have received from the Connecticut Departments of Public Health (DPH) and Education (CSDE) since my last communication the afternoon of December 31, 2021. We have new guidance related to the impact of COVID-19 on school operations, and we were able to discuss the changes with the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD). Below is a summary of the policy and procedural changes that we will implement going forward.

Quarantine, Isolation, Testing and Return to Activities

The DPH now advises that it is appropriate to allow school districts to follow the guidance released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on December 27, 2021. The DPH is advising that school districts may apply a shorter quarantine period, reduced to five (5) days. Below is the specific guidance from the DPH.

- Individuals who are symptomatic associated with COVID-19 should isolate at home, test for the virus with a PCR, antigen, or self-test, and remain away from activities until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours and other symptoms are significantly improved.
- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home for at least 5 days, or longer if symptoms develop and persist.
- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals who are notified that they have had a COVID-19 close contact should quarantine at home and test for the virus with a PCR, antigen, or self-test, 5 days after their last exposure to the COVID-19 case.

If your child was quarantined on or before December 31, 2021 and is now symptom-free, they may return to school on Thursday, January 6, 2022. Please confirm the return date with your school nurse.

Please see [DPH guidance](#) for further information.

Testing Kits for Staff and Students

The CSDE is providing testing kits to help further protect staff, children, and families. These rapid home tests are to be used primarily to screen those who are symptomatic in order to determine who should not be present in school. The test kits are provided to address the following three needs:

- If a child or staff member exhibits symptoms and needs to be screened for COVID-19;
- If a child or staff member has a direct exposure to an individual with COVID-19;
- If a class or program is experiencing multiple cases of COVID-19, a school may want to distribute tests to all students in that classroom if they have difficulty accessing tests.

Each of our schools will distribute available tests to staff and families based on these needs. Home test kits will be distributed through the nurse's office at your child's school in order for parents to conduct the test at home. **Parents and/or staff members may reach out directly to the school nurse if a self-test kit is needed for these purposes.**

Contact Tracing

DPH and FVHD recommend that schools begin to refocus the activities of health staff away from the investigation of relatively low risk in-school exposures and toward the identification, early isolation, and clinical management of students and staff with active symptoms that could be related to COVID-19. They advise that routine contract tracing of individual exposures that occur inside schools or during school organized and supervised activities can be discontinued.

This position is influenced by the continued implementation of well established mitigation strategies; infrequently identified person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 inside school buildings; and very high numbers of student quarantine days compared to the very low number of school close contacts who become infected.

I recognize that the information provided in this communication varies from our current practices and is representative of the evolving nature of the pandemic. We will continue to provide updates to our guidance as new relevant information is provided.

I wish you and your families health and happiness in the new year. Your continued partnership is appreciated as we navigate these complex times. Should you have any questions about these changes, please reach out to our COVID Liaison, Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan.

Regards,

Matt Curtis
Superintendent