

February 24, 2022

Dear Simsbury Families and Staff:

Over the next few weeks, our school system will be entering a transition period in our response to COVID-19, moving from an emergency response model into a period of routine management and control of the disease. Obviously, the mask-optional approach that begins next Monday, February 28th is a significant part of that plan, but there are a few other items that we need to share at this time.

- **“Stay Home If You’re Sick”** – As we have done throughout the pandemic, we urge families and staff to follow the advice of staying home if you’re symptomatic. Self-test kits are now a useful tool in helping make that determination, but we still ask you to be cautious if you are feeling ill. Please know that individuals who are identified as positive cases must still quarantine for five days and wear a mask for days 6-10. In addition, the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD) is still recommending quarantines for five days for unvaccinated individuals who are household close contacts to a positive case.
- **Self-Test Kits** – The State of Connecticut is sending school districts an enormous supply of self-test kits, and we will be picking up our supply next Wednesday. **We have been asked to distribute two kits (with two tests each) to every student and every staff member in the system.** This distribution will begin at the end of next week, and principals will confirm through an email what day students will be bringing them home. Because the supply is so plentiful, the Department of Public Health (DPH) has suggested that families may want to consider using one of the tests to “screen” for positive cases at the start of this mask-optional period. That is a recommendation, not a mandate, so please make your own decision about your use of these tests. Again, the easy availability of self-test kits is an important element of this transition to more routine management.
- **Contact Tracing** – Now that case counts have come down to much more manageable levels, the FVHD has asked its schools to return to some element of contact tracing of positive cases. The purpose of this contact tracing will **not** be to quarantine students or staff who might be identified as close contacts. Instead, information will be shared with individuals and/or families so that they can be extra vigilant about monitoring for symptoms and make an informed choice about the potential for using a self-test kit. At the elementary level, contact tracing will occur for the classroom and cafeteria. At the secondary level (where vaccination rates are much higher), nurses and administrators will analyze positive cases to identify any “clusters” that develop through contact tracing. Thus, it will still be very important for families to continue to report positive cases to us through the [reporting form](#) that is available on our website.
- **Bus Rules** – As shared in our last communication, the mask mandates for public conveyances were established at the national, not the state, level, and they remain in effect. If your child takes a bus or van, please continue to supply them with a mask to wear during that portion of the day. We know it may be counterintuitive for kids to

understand why they need to do this, but we ask you to have that conversation as a family and to encourage your child's cooperation.

- **FVHD Vaccine Clinics** – As noted many times, vaccinations remain one of the most important mitigation strategies in the response to COVID-19. As such, the FVHD has decided to offer one more opportunity to its community members to get vaccinated and/or boosted. Simsbury Public Schools is pleased to announce that we will host these latest clinics at Henry James Memorial School. Clinics will be held from 5:00 to 6:00 pm on March 2nd and March 23rd. More information is available under the COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Information tab on our [Coronavirus webpage](#).

As the mask-optional date approaches, teachers will be leading age-appropriate discussions with students about why some will choose to stay masked while others will not. These conversations are proving to be excellent discussions about community and about respecting others' choices and perspectives. Hopefully, this is just one more way that we are transitioning into routine management of COVID-19.

Assistant Superintendent Neil Sullivan remains the liaison for our district's COVID-19 response; please reach out to him with any questions.

Be well!

Sincerely,

Matt Curtis
Superintendent of Schools