



SIMSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

August 17, 2021

Dear Simsbury Families:

With approximately two weeks before we reopen our doors, I hope this finds you and your family enjoying the remaining summer days. We are excited to welcome back our students and staff to another great year of teaching, learning, and growth!

As September 1, 2021 is quickly approaching, I wanted to provide a comprehensive update about the measures we will be implementing to ensure a safe and healthy start to the school year and the continuity of in-person instruction from Day 1. These practices remain aligned with the CDC and the Department of Public Health (DPH), as well as our local health officials at the Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD) -- agencies whose guidance we have followed throughout the pandemic.

Masks: We know this is an important topic to our community, as we have received many questions about whether or not we will be requiring masks for staff and students. There is strong sentiment on both sides of the issue. At this point, the Governor's [Executive Order 13A](#), is in place until September 30, 2021. The order states that *regardless of vaccination status*, masks must be worn in multiple locations, including schools. Further, during meetings this week with the DPH and FVHD, both agencies made mask recommendations in alignment with this order. Therefore, please send your child to school each day with a clean mask, as wearing them will be required of anyone while in our school buildings.

Contact Tracing & Quarantining: Contact tracing will continue to be implemented as a mitigation strategy. We will follow CDC guidelines for that process. We anticipate that should quarantines be required, we will be utilizing the CDC option for those in quarantine to test on Day 5 of the quarantine for a return to in-person instruction on Day 8, should that test return negative. If one chooses not to test, then quarantine will be 10 days. Final determinations about quarantine will be made by the FVHD. *At this time, if a vaccinated individual is a close contact and asymptomatic, no quarantining is necessary. If an individual is not vaccinated, the individual will require quarantining.*

Vaccines and Vaccination Cards: The CDC and DPH continue to promote vaccines as the most effective mitigation strategy to address COVID and to ensure continuity of in-person learning. If you are intending to vaccinate eligible family members and have not yet done so, please plan accordingly. If you require assistance in finding a vaccination site, please refer to [2-1-1 Connecticut](#).

To facilitate the most efficient contact tracing process and quickly determine the extent to which quarantining is required for those deemed close contacts to a positive case, we are asking all staff and families to share vaccination cards with us. This is not mandatory nor a condition of attendance, but it is a strong recommendation from the FVHD. Student vaccination information will be kept confidential by school nurses and will only be accessed when necessary for contact

tracing. Details as to how to share vaccination information will be communicated by principals.

Testing: You may have heard that free testing for unvaccinated, asymptomatic students is being offered to CT school districts. This testing would require parental consent and would be conducted during the school day; however, the benefit of such a program would require a very high percentage of families to consent to such testing. Therefore, in consultation with the FVHD, we have decided to not access screening testing at this time, as the intention of the program is to target low vaccination/high case-count communities. Additionally, we know that testing in our area is readily available at a [variety of sites](#). Should conditions change such that this screening testing option would result in greater benefit, we will reconsider the opportunity.

Teaching and Learning: Legislatively, we will not have an option for students to participate in full distance learning this year ([CSDE Guidance Regarding the Future of Remote Learning in CT Schools](#)). Additionally, the CT State Department of Education (CSDE) prohibits the provision of remote snow days for 2021-22. However, any student quarantined by the FVHD will be given instructional access to their classroom(s). Details outlining those particulars are forthcoming from principals.

Breakfast and Lunch Update: Once again this year, Simsbury Public Schools has obtained a waiver and USDA funding in order to provide meals at no cost to all students. This program includes breakfast and lunch. Additionally, all our cafeterias will return to selling additional a la carte items that have proven to be popular with students. Please read this [communication](#) from our new Director of Nutrition Services, Beth LaPane, for further information.

Additional Mitigation Practices: A quick-reference document continues to be included on our [website](#). This is another important resource that will be updated as we receive new information from the DPH, CSDE, and FVHD. Please pay close attention to the daily health screening protocol to be utilized prior to each school day. In short, if a school community member is displaying any symptoms of illness, we ask those individuals to stay home until symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of medicinal intervention. The FVHD encourages the testing of symptomatic individuals.

Certainly, this is a lot of information and detail to absorb. We have scheduled a Board of Education meeting on August 24th, at the Simsbury Public Library, to provide an overview of school reopening, inclusive of mitigation measures and enrollment information. The live and re-broadcasted meetings can be viewed on Comcast channels 95 or 1070 and on Frontier channel 6070, as well as the [SimsburyTV.org](#) website and YouTube Channel. Public comments can be provided in-person or via Zoom. Please email kwilde@simsburyschools.net by 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 24, 2021 to register to address the Board of Education via Zoom.

I think it is safe to say that as a community, we were hopeful to be in a place with the pandemic that resulted in different health guidance to open the school year. With that said, I remain excited for the opportunities for rich learning and shared community in the year ahead. I thank you for your partnership as we continue to provide an outstanding education for every student in Simsbury.

Sincerely,

Matt Curtis

Superintendent of Schools