



# SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## *Special Services Department*

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Dear Parents/Guardians of students in the Suffield Public Schools:

We hope you have enjoyed the remaining days of summer. As promised, this letter will serve as a detailed summary of the return to school protocols and expectations in keeping health and safety a priority during this uncertain time. We hope this letter will clarify any questions and give you guidance for the future as we navigate the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. These protocols have been evolving over the last few months in accordance with CDC recommendations, the North Central Health District, Suffield's Board of Education, the Central Office Administration team, the SPS nurses, and our district's medical advisor, Dr. Richard Segool.

Every effort has been made to make these policies and protocols clear and safe to protect not only the students and staff, but also the families throughout our community. All plans and policies are located on the Suffield Public Schools website and are subject to change as this virus is evolving and recommendations change almost daily. Additional resources for families will be posted and updated with changing guidance. We are working diligently to stay on top of updates from the CDC. As we keep reminding ourselves, we need to be able to "modify on the fly."

It is important that parents and family members in your household participate in monitoring not only the students in your home, but all family members for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The symptoms of COVID-19 that you should be monitoring for are:

- fever 100.0 or over
- chills
- cough
- shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- sore throat
- headache
- fatigue
- muscle/body aches
- abdominal pain
- nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- new loss of taste or smell
- rash
- known contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

Temperature taking and daily morning check-ins to be sure that your child is feeling well enough to come to school will be of the utmost importance. Our district will be conducting temperature checks for the first few weeks of school in classrooms by our district nurses and our health aides. While not a requirement as part of the state's reopening plan, we are doing this to provide an added layer in helping to contain the spread of this virus and keep our schools open. If your child records a temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher he/she will be asked to report to the nurse's office for further evaluation. We are also asking families to answer the following questions before sending your children to school each morning. If the answer to any of these questions is yes, your child should stay home.

1. *Over the past 72 hours have you had a fever?*
2. *Over the past 10 days have you had any of the following symptoms:*
  - a. *Cough*
  - b. *Runny nose*
  - c. *Congestion*
  - d. *Sore throat*
  - e. *Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea*
3. *Have you had any sudden loss of sense of smell or taste?*
4. *Have you been around anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days?*
5. *Do you live in a household with a quarantined individual?*

Please understand that if your child comes to school symptomatic and is sent home, they will be required to stay home for 10 calendar days, unless there is documentation of a discrete infection (such as an ear infection or strep throat) that can be treated with antibiotics. In that case, the child will be permitted to return to school with documentation from a doctor **and** they must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication and symptoms significantly improved. If there is no discrete infection and the illness is viral in nature, the student will be required to stay out of school for 10 days. The only exception to staying out of school for 10 days is one negative COVID-19 test. This test cannot be a rapid or an antibody test and documentation will need to be provided.

The district has also established a mask wearing policy that will be mandatory for all grade levels as well as all staff unless a medical condition with documentation is provided. Face masks are vitally important in containing the spread of COVID-19 and masks with multi-layers offer the best protection. The district is awaiting further guidance from the Department of Public Health regarding facemask recommendations. At this point, gaitors and bandanas will be permitted; however, we are encouraging the use of facemasks that contain ear straps that hold the mask in place. The only time when mask wearing will be relaxed is during recess and lunchtime. **Please launder your child's face masks regularly.** It is a good idea to pack an extra facemask in your child's backpack in the event that their facemask is accidentally soiled. Please label all of your child's belongings as well. Should your child forget his/her mask, extras will be available in the nurses' offices.

We, as a district, are focusing on educating our students and staff on all of the important areas we want our kids to be thinking about while in school. Our high school students have created videos that will be shown district-wide to our students as an educational platform in the following areas:

- Handwashing
- Cough/Sneeze etiquette
- Mask Wearing
- Social Distancing

Due to the highly contagious nature of this virus, the culture of the nurse's office is changing this year. In order to better triage our student's, teachers will be calling the nurse's office prior to sending children. Students presenting with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be assessed and a determination will be made if isolation is necessary. If a student is symptomatic, he/she would then be escorted to the isolation room for further evaluation and monitoring. This same process will apply to staff as well. Students will then wait in the isolation room until a parent or guardian is able to pick up. Parents will not be able to enter the building; students will be escorted out to their parents.

We understand that this is a lot of information to digest. We will continue to be as transparent as possible when our policies change in accordance with updated CDC recommendations. We would be remiss if we did not say how thankful and grateful we are for the continued community support throughout this pandemic planning process. Our hope is that everyone in our community will continue to work together to practice healthy habits (hand washing, social distancing and mask wearing) to minimize the risk of infection and keep our schools open!

We look forward to seeing our students back in the classroom next week! Please don't hesitate to reach out to us should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your School Nurses

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