

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

40 FIELD STREET · PAWCATUCK, CT 06379

PHONE: (860) 572-0506

FAX: (860) 599-8948



BOARD OF EDUCATION: Frank Todisco, Board Chair; Heidi Simmons, Board Secretary

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Van W. Riley, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
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January 7, 2021

Dear SPS Staff:

Democracy: In light of yesterday's unfortunate and unnecessary events at our nation's Capitol Building, it is important to remember our schools are here to provide a safe learning environment for all of our students. Teachers and other staff members are encouraged to respectfully entertain questions from students and relieve any anxiety or fear they express about yesterday's events or potential disturbances over the upcoming few weeks. This is an opportunity for us to reinforce the importance of the democratic process and how they may contribute to it in a positive, respectful manner in the future as part of their role as informed, caring, and thoughtful citizens. Do not hesitate to reach out to your building principal if you have any concerns or questions related to this issue.

Teaching Next Week: As of today, we are in a position to return to the hybrid model effective, Monday, January 11th. Should circumstances change and we need to pivot to a full distance learning model next week, you will be notified as soon as possible. As always, our intent is to provide you as much notice as possible on any shifts in the instructional delivery model to assist you in professional and personal planning.

COVID-19: The Connecticut Departments of Education and Public Health have collaborated and allowed for modifications to the isolation and quarantine protocols associated with COVID-19 infections in school settings. However, the decision to adjust to the new protocols is to be made in conjunction with recommendation from each district's local health department. **Stonington Public Schools will be adhering to our current protocols, and not implementing these new optional recommendations.** Reasons for this decision include:

- The 14-day quarantine time frame remains the best practice per the Center for Disease Control
- Recommended by local school district medical advisors, Dr. Michael Blefeld and Dr. Vijay Sikand
- Area districts including: East Lyme, Lyme Old Lyme, LEARN, Groton, North Stonington, and Voluntown are continuing to adhere to the 14-day quarantine recommendation
- Current protocol has been successful in mitigating spread and keeping schools open
- Stonington Public Schools has had cases of students/staff testing positive **post** day 10 of quarantine window
- CSDE recommends districts utilize the recommendation of their local health departments, as local variables influence these decisions. Currently, Ledge Light Health district still strongly recommends the 14-day quarantine period for close contacts of positive individuals.
- As a reminder, click here to access the Stonington Public Schools' [Decision Tree](#).

One new change is acceptance of a quick COVID-19 test is the "Abbott Molecular Test", because it is considered a PCR test. Please request this specific test from your healthcare provider if you plan to submit a rapid test result.

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Leave Update: Please be advised that as of December 31, 2020 the 80 hour paid leave made available under the FFCRA for COVID-19 related absences for staff members unable to work remotely is no longer available. The district has made every effort to accommodate remote working opportunities for those staff members who qualify and are able to fulfill their work responsibilities from home. These individuals are unaffected by the shift in the FFCRA funding. Staff members who may subsequently qualify for remote working assignments due to COVID-19 must still contact Therese Roush in the Business Office at 860-572-0506 at extension 2101. Written approval for remote work must meet specific requirements and be approved in advance through the Office of the Superintendent. Should you not be able to fulfill your work related responsibilities from home and need to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 you will be required to use your sick days in order to be paid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Van Riley".

Dr. Van Riley
Superintendent of Schools