



October 15, 2021

Dear Lamoille North Families,

This week I write with several updates, some of which you may have heard about. The state has entered discussions about changes to the way schools respond to positive cases and the ensuing contact tracing that occurs with each case. Currently, anyone who meets the medical definition of an unvaccinated close contact must quarantine. The basic tenets of the new program being considered, called "Test to Stay", would allow close contacts to stay in school instead of quarantine if, and only if, they opt to take a rapid COVID-19 test each morning for seven consecutive days. Theoretically, students would be tested outside of school each morning and could enter the building if the rapid test is negative. If the test is positive, the student would be sent home to quarantine and asked to take a PCR test, which is the gold standard for COVID-19 diagnosis. Parent/Caregiver permission would be necessary for this option to test.

The logistics of this new program are challenging and the state has not fully considered whether this program is possible given staffing needs, space, and other considerations. Our nurses do not have the capacity to implement this program as it is outlined, because of the demands of their regular jobs, and the state has recognized this and is thinking about other possible solutions. Additionally, the effectiveness and safety of this new program has not been vetted with all necessary health professionals.

There are also questions about whether a student can ride a bus during this seven-day testing window, which brings with it another host of considerations. The Vermont Department of Health and the Agency of Education are not ready to put this in place until all important questions are addressed. If you have time, please read this article from the Times-Argus detailing what the "Test to Stay" concerns are across Vermont.

[Times-Argus Article on Test to Stay](#)

We anticipate many more details about this from the state in the coming days and weeks to address the many unknowns. However, what I know to be true is that the health and safety of our students and staff members remain our primary concerns, and all of us work very hard to understand and respond to new information as we receive it. We will share information about all of these issues as we learn more.

On another note, it is time to start thinking about snow days! Per previous communications, we will not be allowed to use inclement weather days as remote learning days as we were able to last year during the state of emergency. As you know, we review many sources of information about weather events to guide our decision making regarding whether to "call" a snow day. However, the most important factor is the news I hear from our Road Crews, who are on the roads well before 4:00 a.m. each day. Roads might be totally accessible and safe in Eden, but icy in Hyde Park, and freezing rain in Cambridge. If one member of the road crew indicates that roads may not

be safe for busses, we will call a snow day, given that our transportation is fully centralized. All of our busses travel to the middle and high school from our local towns. Our goal is safety for all members of our school communities. I'll share more about snow days in the weeks to come as we get closer to winter conditions.

On a related note, and as you may know, there is a national shortage of bus drivers. Lamoille North is also impacted by this shortage. There have been a few occasions already this school year when we have needed to get creative about bus routes at the last minute due to a shortage. We make every effort to accommodate the shortage and communicate in as timely a manner as possible if routes or athletic events are impacted. We recognize that this can pose a major inconvenience to families and are looking at ways to attract more drivers to work with us so that we can provide consistent transportation.

As always, thank you for your continued partnership in ensuring a safe and rich learning experience for our students. Please reach out if you have any thoughts or questions.

My best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools
Lamoille North Supervisory Union