



# SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## *Office of the Superintendent*

*Timothy M. Van Tassel*  
Superintendent

*Laura Guerrette*  
Executive Secretary

November 5, 2021

Dear Suffield Public Schools Parents, Guardians, Faculty and Staff:

I am sending this communication to update everyone on our district's quarantine procedures beginning Monday, November 15, 2021. In a press conference yesterday afternoon, the Governor announced that the Department of Public Health has developed a "Screen to Stay" option for school districts due to low COVID-19 transmission trends across the state and within schools and the importance of keeping students in schools. The new policy will minimize the impact of quarantines on continuity of learning, while continuing to safeguard the health and safety of students and staff. The following provides a synopsis of the Screen to Stay expectations. It is anticipated we will receive further guidance within the next from the Department of Public School.

According to the information we have received, unvaccinated students who are determined to be close contacts will no longer need to quarantine if the following conditions are met:

- The exposure occurred exclusively during the school day (no extracurricular or social contact);
- If indoors or on a school bus or other school transportation, and both the contact and the COVID-19 case were consistently masked during the exposure even if brief unmasked periods (e.g., snack time, cafeteria) occurred, as long as six feet or more of space was consistently maintained;
- If outdoors, the individuals were masked or unmasked but were supervised by staff (e.g., mask breaks, physical education, recess);
- The close contact remains asymptomatic (any symptoms revert to regular isolation/quarantine).

Examples of close contact scenarios that do not support a Screen and Stay approach would be:

- Contact with a case during interscholastic or other athletic activities (other than during supervised outdoor physical education and recess);
- Contact occurring during social interactions or similar activities outside of school (e.g., birthday parties, dining out, sleepovers);
- Contact where the individuals were not consistently and correctly wearing masks indoors and a six-foot distance was not maintained;
- The contact occurred between members of the same household (i.e., the contact lives with the case);
- If, upon return to school, the contact cannot consistently and correctly wear a mask.

(State of Connecticut, Office of the Governor, 2021)

If the guidance document we receive from the Department of Public Health provides additional conditions, we will update our COVID-19 protocol document on our district website.

To formalize the Screen to Stay option, we will be revising our “Close Contact Notification Letter” that is sent to families. Within the new letter, we will be adding a hyperlink that will route parents to the district’s daily COVID-19 symptom screening instrument. The screening tool will need to be completed by parents of students determined to be “close contacts” prior to their child arriving to school each day. The daily testing tool will be automatically submitted to the district online, and it will need to be completed daily for the duration of the former quarantine period. At this point, we believe that students can test out of the daily screening requirement on Day 8 if the student is tested after Day 5 and is negative. We are not certain that this will be an option, but we are anticipating this will be permitted. Important to note, with the new Screen to Stay option, close contacts will not be quarantined by the district. Therefore, they will not not be able to access remote learning.

Fortunately, we have had very few quarantines in the Suffield Public Schools since the beginning of the school year. The CDC’s updated definition of close contacts within schools has assisted with this, as well as, the vigilance and support we have received from our families. As with all new procedures, we will be closely monitoring the effectiveness of Screen to Stay. I am encouraged by the success we have had with decreasing our mitigation measures, and I am confident that this new procedure will be met with the same results.

As always, we thank you for your support and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,  
Timothy M. Van Tasel, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools