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## Superintendent's Update 12-21-21

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Thomas Scarice <do\_not\_reply@westportps.org>  
Reply-To: Thomas Scarice <do\_not\_reply@westportps.org>

Tue, Dec 21, 2021 at 3:31 PM

Dear Westport Families,

Throughout the pandemic our community and our schools have been able to flexibly adapt our mitigating measures in order to respond to the changing conditions. Our benchmark has been to continually review our strategies and consider changes every 4-6 weeks, sometimes sooner. However, the recent sharp increase in cases over the past four or five days warrants action.

The district has increased the frequency of reporting cases in direct proportion to the increase in the volume of positive tests. Our weekly screening program, administered yesterday, identified 12 asymptomatic cases. In addition, since this morning, another 18 cases have been reported. The town of Westport has reported 113 cases this week, up from a total of 41 last week.

Nearly all who have tested positive report mild to moderate symptoms. Based on minimal transmission in the school setting compared to the community, we continue to believe that our schools may be one of the safest places for our students to be.

### **Increase in Mitigating Measures**

However, in order to strengthen our measures and keep our students and staff safe, we will take actions to limit activities we believe may contribute to the potential of spread within our schools at this point in time. These measures include the following:

- The grade 8 trip to SHS for the Candlelight performance will be cancelled and other opportunities will be explored
- Holiday parties in the classroom will continue with an emphasis on social distancing
- Effective immediately, parent and school visitors will be restricted from accessing our school buildings through January 7th
- Concerts/performances will not be held through January 7th

While we regret having to take these measures just prior to the holiday, it is our hope that this present wave of COVID-19 will subside and our cases will decrease which will allow mitigating measures to be relaxed.

### **Remote Learning**

I have received a couple of inquiries regarding a preemptive move to remote learning. Remote learning is not an option for districts this year. Districts are not permitted to implement remote instruction as a school, or as a district, preemptively like last year. School districts are able to implement continued educational opportunities (i.e. tutoring, remote contact with teachers outside of the classroom, before and after school programs, etc.) for students who must be in COVID-19 isolation or quarantine. This year, school districts are not permitted to implement remote learning. That provision was removed prior to the start of the school year.

Again, based on our data and experience over the past two school years, we continue to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, with minimal transmission of the virus in our settings, particularly when compared to community transmission rates. Maintaining continued contact with peers and faculty, while attending to the social/emotional needs of our students is critical to their long term mental health and overall wellness.

We will continue to monitor cases throughout our break and provide case updates through our emails. Families are asked to continue to report positive cases through our [hotline](#). Please note that contact tracing will be limited throughout the break.

Respectfully  
Thomas Scarice  
Superintendent of Schools

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