



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

Timothy M. Van Tassel, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Laura Guerrette
Executive Secretary

January 3, 2022

Dear Parents, Guardians, Faculty and Staff:

As noted in yesterday's conference call, Suffield Public Schools has updated its isolation and quarantine procedures to align with recent state and federal guidance. In addition, we have modified several of our associated COVID-19 protocols as we make efforts to maintain normal school operations amid increasing positive cases and exposures of students, faculty, and staff. While several of these new procedures may seem counterintuitive with our current experience with COVID-19, we are keeping the district in alignment with the recommendations of the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the North Central District Health Department (NCDHD), and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).

It is anticipated that the following isolation and quarantine guidance we received from the DPH on New Year's Eve will continue to evolve in the days and weeks ahead. With increasing cases and the challenges that these new infections and exposures can pose on school operations, it is possible that the guidance may require further modification. We will continue to monitor our success with these new procedures and review any concerns we have with our medical advisor and state health officials. In terms of the updated procedures for the Suffield Public Schools, please note the following:

Student/Staff Isolation Protocol:

Symptomatic (Fully Vaccinated)

- Symptomatic with Positive Test
 - **5 Day Isolation** and return to school on Day 6 (following the date of positive test) if symptoms significantly improve and fever-free for 24 hours
- Symptomatic with Negative Test
 - May return to school if symptoms significantly improve and fever-free for 24 hours

Symptomatic (Partially Vaccinated or Unvaccinated)

- If there is a known close contact or exposure
 - **5 Day Isolation** and return to school on Day 6 if symptoms significantly improve and fever-free for 24 hours
- If unknown close contact or exposure

- May return to school with negative test or symptoms significantly improve and fever-free for 24 hours

Student/Staff Quarantine Protocol:

A. Asymptomatic Close Contact or Exposure (Vaccinated)

- Continue with in-person learning/teaching
- Test for COVID-19 after Day 5
- Consider quarantining for non-school related activities

B. Asymptomatic Close Contact or Exposure (Partially Vaccinated or Unvaccinated)

a. *Classroom Exposure to Positive COVID-19 Case (excluding lunch/snack)*

- Screen and Stay
- Test for COVID-19 after Day 5

or

- **5 Day Quarantine** and return to school on Day 6 if no symptoms exist
- Test for COVID-19 after Day 5

b. *Non-classroom/Non-school Exposure/Unknown Exposure to Positive COVID-19 Case*

- **5 Day Quarantine** and return to school on Day 6 if no symptoms exist
- Test for COVID-19 after Day 5

Contact Tracing:

During periods of high transmission, the DPH has recommended that school districts discontinue contact tracing efforts. Instead of entirely removing contact tracing, the Suffield Public Schools will continue to contact trace when it is feasible to do so. In the event of a classroom exposure, our schools will continue to send COVID-19 notifications for all students within the classroom. In addition, the district will be notifying families of probable clusters in any of our schools.

SPS COVID-19 Online Reporting System:

The district is now requesting that families report student COVID-19 illnesses or exposures through an online reporting system found on the district website. Our new online system will enable families to report:

- COVID-19 Positive Test Results
- COVID-19 Close Contact or Exposures
- COVID-19 Symptoms

The important information submitted in this system will be used for health reporting, attendance-taking, and determining access to temporary remote learning (when applicable). More specifically, the [SPS COVID-19 Online Reporting System](#) will guide parents through a series of questions that will inform them of the steps they must take to return to school and/or access Temporary Remote Learning. Please understand that we will be implementing the use of the online portal during periods of high transmission only. While we realize that an automated COVID-19 reporting system is less desirable than a direct contact with a school administrator or nurse, the system is intended to assist us in prioritizing and expediting our response to parents. All other school and nurse communications that are unrelated to COVID-19 should continue through the main office and/or nurse's offices.

Technology Call Center:

Our efforts to continue to support students that are accessing remote instruction remains a top priority for us. With the potential for increasing numbers of students accessing remote learning, we have re-established our Technology Call Center. If your child is home and experiencing difficulties connecting to the remote environment or is having Chromebook issues, please call [860 668 3376](tel:8606683376) and a member of the district's technology team will assist you.

Technology Call Center Hours of Operation

7:00 am – 2:30 pm

Remote Learning

As shared during last night's conference call, school districts have not been authorized by the Governor or the CSDE to provide the option of remote learning to all students during the 2021-2022 school year. The CSDE has provided few exceptions to this, and the temporary remote learning opportunities we have offered this year were in keeping with their expectations. If this should happen to change, we will certainly communicate any changes as soon as we are made aware them.

Student/Staff COVID-19 Testing

Due to increasing demand, the school district will be expanding our student and staff COVID-19 testing opportunity to Mondays and Thursdays. We will continue to offer this free PCR testing option for as long as the district is able to provide it. If you would like to register, please use the following link:

If Under 18

Go to <https://testcenter.concentricbyginkgo.com/minor-consent/>
Use Access Code DRWVIF. Complete the information requested.

If Over 18

Go to <https://testcenter.concentricbyginkgo.com/invite-by-code>
Use Access Code DRWVIF. Complete the information requested.

In closing, I recognize and appreciate the concerns shared by many members of our school community about returning our students to in-person learning, as well as, the concerns expressed about the impact of school closures on our students and families. This paradox truly elucidates the challenges associated with this decision-making during this pandemic – that there are really no perfect answers. As we look ahead, we will closely monitor health and safety metrics throughout the coming weeks and make our decisions based on the information and options we have available to us. Most importantly, I encourage everyone to do all that you can to follow the guidance we have been given, stay home when ill, isolate and quarantine if necessary, and work together so that our schools can remain open and safe for our students, faculty, and staff.

I thank you for your continued support!

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