

BLIND BROOK-RYE UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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COLIN BYRNE, D.P.S.
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

December 30, 2021

Update on School Opening and Testing

Dear Members of the Blind Brook Community,

I hope that everyone has a happy and healthy New Year! We are looking forward to seeing everyone again in person on January 3rd!

This week there have been some changes to COVID recommendations and guidelines that have been released by various health organizations. As these releases have caused confusion among some of our community members, I want to both clarify these items and speak about their impact on our district. I am going to apologize in advance for the length of this letter, but there is much to share.

Before going into specifics, I do want to reiterate that the Blind Brook School District is required to follow the guidelines issued by the Westchester County Department of Health or any directive given directly by the New York State Department of Health. We cannot adopt the recommendations made by the CDC until we get direction from one of these organizations.

Length of Quarantine

On Tuesday, December 28th, the New York State Department of Health released an advisory that shortened the required quarantine time for health care workers as well as other critical members of the workforce including **school personnel**. These individuals must be fully vaccinated, have no fever, have improving symptoms, have no runny nose and wear a well-fitting face mask. At this time, shortened quarantines for other individuals, including students, *have not been authorized*. However, please keep in mind that vaccinated children who are exposed to someone who is positive are highly unlikely to be required to be quarantined if they are properly wearing masks. If I receive any updated information from New York State or Westchester County in regards to reduction of quarantine time, I will let everyone know as soon as possible.

Requiring Testing for Return to School

As we are going to be having everyone return to school in person next week, there have been questions about having all staff and students get tested before returning. School districts do not currently have the authority to require individuals to get tested before coming into our buildings. We also do not have the resources to provide a test to all students and staff members prior to the start of school. I would encourage everyone to get tested if possible, but realize that the current shortage of available tests makes this **very difficult**. I would also strongly encourage all students and staff to take advantage of our in-school testing program through Mirimus. As was stated in a previous email, to take advantage of this testing please send in [the permission slip](#) to the school nurse.

Test To Stay Program

I have also been asked about implementing a test-to-stay program for students who are exposed to someone who has tested positive. We have been looking into the possibility of setting up this program and may be able to do so in the near future thanks to the New York State Governor and Department of Health. On Wednesday, December 29th, I received a letter stating that New York State is working on distributing a set of rapid tests to school districts. I am extremely thankful to the State for providing this resource as locating testing materials has been incredibly difficult. I will share information about how and when these tests will be used once I know more. I do want to point out that New York State has specifically stated that the test-to-stay program is for unvaccinated students who have had school-based exposures only so application of this program may be limited.

I know that the surge in COVID has raised people's anxiety levels for a myriad of reasons. Despite all that has happened, our school buildings have continued to be among the safest places to be. We will continue to look for ways to keep our students safe while providing them with the best education possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Colin M. Byrne
Interim Superintendent of Schools