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Seeing all of the smiling eyes over the past few days has been incredible. Starting on Monday with all of the staff and then visiting schools yesterday and today has been a wonderful lift to the spirit and an authentic exhibition of the positive energy around the opening of schools. I was fortunate to see a lot of familiar students at WA this afternoon who still remembered me from their old Stony Brook days. Students at Abbot this morning seemed excited to know that our offices are right next door and that even though I wasn't at SB, I still remembered a lot of their older siblings. Yesterday, the majority of our first and second grade students at Robinson and Nabnasset as well as some of the 3-5 students at Crisafulli wanted to know why my mask was so big. They seemed satisfied when I told them it was covering a very large beard. Tomorrow, I will be able to spend time at Day, Miller, Blanchard and Stony Brook to round out the Opening Week tour. Visiting schools and spending time with students is definitely the best part of any week.

As was mentioned before school started, WPS has elected to participate in the DESE sponsored COVID-19 testing program supported by CIC-health. The overall program includes multiple testing options for districts. We are initially exploring the "test and stay" program which will allow students identified as close contacts while at school the opportunity to take a rapid COVID test at school to see if they remain negative in order to stay in school. We are working with all of the school nurses to assess whether or not also implementing symptomatic testing throughout the day would be a benefit or create a more challenging scenario for our already busy health clinics. All COVID testing requires parent or guardian permission in order for students to participate. The consent form is accessible online and covers all of the potential DESE testing programs: the two previously mentioned (Test and Stay, Symptomatic) along with the Routine COVID testing (which was previously called "pooled" testing). We are not considering Routine COVID testing at this time; however, the consent form is for all available testing. It clearly states that the school district must inform parents of any changes before implementing them. So, we are asking you at this time to consider consenting to both "test and stay" testing and "symptomatic". If we ever decide to consider Routine COVID testing, you will be informed ahead of time and given the opportunity to change your consent.

Please visit this link to the online consent form through CIC-health: <https://www.cic-health.com/consent/ma?district=Westford#consent>

Additionally, you can access this link to receive more specific information about Contact Tracing and Quarantining under the most recent DESE/ DPH protocols: [Family Information Regarding DESE testing and Quarantining Protocols](#)

Both of these links will also soon be posted on our website under the [School Opening Fall 2021](#) tab.

In our district wide staff meeting on Monday, I was able to share how my three priorities of Safety, Growth and Happiness are being focused more specifically this year into Belonging, Relationships

and Joy. As a district we are exploring what it means to belong in Westford Public Schools? While it is something that we talk about tangentially it is not a hard question that we have asked out loud in recent years. Additionally, just as the most important thing in real estate is location, location, location, we know that the most important thing in education is relationships, relationships, relationships. Finally, we talked about the expectation of students and staff experiencing comparable joy throughout the district. All of our schools are unique and teaching is truly an artform inspired by the vast array of personalities and passions that our teachers exhibit. Within that, the level of expected and experienced joy should be high and relatively consistent throughout anyone's experience in Westford Public Schools. Of course, we can't always be happy in every moment and with every activity but if we are focused on fostering resilience, joy which in itself can imply excitement and anticipation can continue to be a regular expectation.

Cheers!
Chris

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