

Dear Families,

We have a number of important updates for this week, and to make it easier for you to find the information you're looking for, we've summarized the topics below:

1. No school
2. Reminder of student schedule
3. Mitigation strategies
4. Vaccination for Staff
5. Athletics
6. Quarantine requirements
7. Case numbers

### **NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS**

This is a reminder that students have no school on Friday, January 15, for teacher professional development and no school on January 18 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr Day. Student meals will not be available.

### **QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS**

As you may know, the CDC and DPH in Connecticut had provided recommendations regarding updated quarantine options. These recommendations were in addition to the 14-day quarantine period, and were for people who are exposed but do not have symptoms of COVID-19. The new options from the CDC and DPH include a quarantine for 10 days if there are no symptoms or 7 days if people receive a negative PCR test and have no symptoms.

At this time, and in consultation with our local health district, the East Windsor schools will continue to require a 14-day quarantine for anyone who is identified as a close contact to a person positive for COVID-19. This is due to the current case data in the community and region. People who are identified as close contacts will need to quarantine for 14 days prior to returning to school (assuming they are not ill at day 15).

We are choosing to act more conservatively at this time in the interest of our student and staff health, and we will keep families and staff updated if we determine the 14-day quarantine is no longer in place.

### **STAFF VACCINATION AND POSSIBLE STUDENT SCHEDULE CHANGES**

Local health districts in Connecticut are beginning to plan for staff in educational settings to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The process to administer the vaccine will require a highly organized plan which will allow the health district and district nurses to vaccinate approximately 200 people in a short time due to the lifespan of the vaccine itself. When we receive notice that East Windsor staff will be vaccinated, we may need to move to a remote learning day(s). Staff would need to be out of classrooms for a period of time and we need to ensure that appropriate supervision will be available for students on that day or days. I'm sharing this possibility now as I know it can create an inconvenience for families who have students needing daycare. I would like for you to have enough notice to establish a plan should we need to move to remote learning with short notice. I apologize that I do not have a specific date but we have heard a tentative timeline of the week of Jan 25. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

### **UPDATE ON ATHLETICS**

Today the CIAC sent an update about the winter sports plan. Our in-district athletic committee - which is composed of myself, the high school and middle school administration, nursing staff, the athletic trainer, the athletic director and coaches - will meet to review the specifics of the plan. Once we have reviewed the CIAC plan, I will provide an update with our district plan as soon as possible.

Based on initial review of the information from the CIAC, practices may not start before January 19 and games may not start any sooner than February 8. East Windsor does not anticipate being ready to start practices on January 19, but we have a target date of January 25 for our athletic practices to begin. More information will follow regarding East Windsor's plan after we are able to completely review the specifics and formulate our next steps.

We want to remind you that, in the fall, we determined that only students who attended school in person were eligible to participate in extracurricular activities. This includes athletics. Families generally reported being concerned about exposure to COVID-19 if students were in school, and those families with those concerns elected to keep students as remote learners. Any students who did not attend school would be at a heightened risk of exposure to COVID-19 if they came into the schools for athletics, particularly in light of new clarifications from the DPH.

Recently, the DPH clarified the heightened risk of exposure with athletics. Students who are engaging in athletics are in closer, more extended contact with others, and are also exerting more than when they are sitting in a classroom or walking in hallways with controlled distance.

Combined with the knowledge of a higher positivity rate of infection and the fact that winter sports are indoors, students would have the potential for greater exposure to COVID-19 with athletics than with regular school attendance. Therefore, we will continue the practice established in the fall to limit participation to those who are attending school in-person.

## **MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

This is a reminder to all families that multiple factors influence our ability to stay in school 4 days a week, move to a hybrid model of instruction, or need to move to full remote learning. The continued wearing of masks, hand hygiene, and maintaining as much distance as possible are several of those strategies. We also need to have anyone who is waiting for COVID-19 test results remain at home until a negative result is received. Attending school while waiting for results is increasing exposure to all other students and staff in the building unnecessarily. Anyone who tests positive must remain out of school.

## **STUDENT SCHEDULES**

We also realize that mask wearing and maintaining social distance out in the community is a challenge. However, our older students have frequently shared that they are not utilizing the mitigation strategies outside of school and are at increased exposure due to social activities they engage in. We are monitoring the rate of positive cases in school, especially at East Windsor High School and will make a decision regarding a return to 4 day in-person learning for EWHS specifically. At this time, we anticipate all students returning to 4 day per week learning on January 25, but that decision is contingent on numbers in the community and the region as well as review of other factors, such as the lack of cohorts possible at the high school level.

## **CASE NUMBERS**

Since returning from the winter break, there have been 13 positive cases of COVID-19 spread across the district. Because of the hybrid model and the fact that many of these people had already begun quarantine, we had few close contacts in school.

I would like to thank Dr. Tudryn for assuming responsibilities for district operations while I needed to be out on medical leave. I am pleased to be back and work and appreciate the kind thoughts and wishes shared with me.

Thank you and have a good night and weekend

Christine