

January 5, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We have certainly experienced our share of challenges since our reopening on January 3rd, and I am writing today to provide you with an update on several important issues. Before that, I would like to thank all school employees for their extraordinary effort and commitment to the school district and our reopening after the holiday break. One quick example comes from Monday, January 3rd, when we had vacancies for 189 substitutes and could only hire 51. The remaining 138 full-day substitute jobs were covered by our teachers and administrators, many of whom are already teaching additional classes beyond their regular schedules.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITY FOR VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION

With a large number of students who are either isolating due to a positive COVID test or under quarantine, virtual instruction has once again become an essential tool to maintain education for students while unable to attend school. We are expanding virtual instructional opportunities, and students will be provided with virtual instruction within 48 hours of notice (maximum) if the student falls in one of the following categories resulting from occurrences/exposures **in or out** of school:

- *Awaiting a test or a test result after suspected exposure to COVID-19.*
- *Tested positive for COVID-19.*
- *Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.*
- *Quarantined for being identified as a close contact.*

Although we continue to receive guidance from the New Jersey Department of Education that we cannot offer remote instruction based solely on parental choice, the above changes expand the pool of students eligible for virtual instruction. For elementary students we will be expanding the time and the number of subjects covered with virtual instruction. Students receiving virtual instruction for the reasons above would not be eligible to participate in any extracurricular activities. These changes go into effect immediately and will continue through January 28, 2022. At that time the district will reevaluate the effectiveness of these changes.

TRANSPORTATION

Currently, we have a large number of drivers who have contracted COVID, and as a result, we are struggling to maintain our services on all routes. Be advised that delays and missed stops are a possibility in the coming days and weeks. The transportation department will continue to provide notice to parents as soon as possible in the event of a delay.

TEST AND STAY

Recently, the New Jersey Department of Health released extensive guidance which establishes a foundation for school districts to implement a test and stay program. If you are not familiar, test and stay programs allow unvaccinated students to remain in school after being identified as close contacts by following a protocol. In general, students would have to follow a “serial testing program” and undergo COVID testing immediately after an in-school exposure and then every other day for up to seven days. There are extensive requirements for schools and students. The District will continue to review the guidance and seek feedback from the community.

EKG TESTING REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

After reviewing the latest guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics, School Physician Dr. Anne DeIngeniis-DePasquale recently advised the District that EKG testing, following a positive COVID test for a student-athlete, is no longer necessary. The student-athlete must be cleared by their physician, who may independently request an EKG.

QUARANTINE

While we anxiously await new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the New Jersey Department of Health, the prior guidance remains in effect. We are maintaining the same quarantine standard we had previously based on direction from the New Jersey Department of Health and consultation with the Wayne Health Department. The District has been following a ten-day quarantine since the start of the school year.

WINDOWS WILL BE OPEN

While we have enjoyed relatively mild weather, this week is another story. A reminder for all parents that one effective COVID mitigation strategy is increasing fresh air in classrooms by opening windows. Please keep this in mind when your child is dressing for school.

ENHANCED CLEANING

We will be implementing enhanced clearing protocols. Ongoing cleaning of high-touch surfaces in classrooms and common areas and additional cleaning of restrooms will be back in place for the immediate future.

IN-DISTRICT STUDENT COVID TESTING

COVID Testing will be available to all of our students starting next week. The Environmental Center next to the Board of Education Offices at 50 Nellis Drive is our testing location. Testing will be available after school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2:30 PM to 5:00 PM starting January 11th. We will work to expand hours if we need to accommodate more students. The District will be sending out more information about creating an account. Students can only be tested after their parent or guardian establishes an account.

Yours truly,



Mark Toback, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools