



# Colchester School District

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September 25, 2020

CSD Community,

First off, I am grateful for your continued support as we opened the school year using both hybrid and fully virtual learning models. These models reduced our in-person class sizes and allowed our staff and students the time and individualized attention to practice new routines and adjust to teaching and learning in hybrid and remote environments.

On Tuesday, September 22nd, Secretary French announced that all Vermont Schools will shift from Step 2 to Step 3 effective Saturday, September 26th. The change in steps came after the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and Agency of Education (AOE) looked at the overall health conditions in Vermont. While there were a handful of cases in schools outside of Colchester, those were the result of individuals contracting the virus in their community and attending school. To date, we have not seen the transmission of the virus in schools.

So, what will be different in Colchester moving from Step 2 to Step 3? The only change that will be visible to students is that athletic games can now occur. All other safety precautions and layers of protection that we have put in place as a district will remain in place. Our cafeterias, gymnasiums, and playgrounds will remain closed for their intended purposes at this time.

You are probably wondering when will we begin to bring our elementary students back for more days of in-person instruction. Both hybrid learning and virtual learning are allowable learning models in Step 2 and Step 3. The change in step level does not change to what extent a district offers in-person instruction, that decision will be made locally. However, the change to Step 3 demonstrates the growing confidence that the state has in schools to successfully mitigate the transmission of the virus.

The Champlain Valley Superintendents have identified 'essential benchmarks' for increasing in-person learning for students in grades K-5. In other words, we will consider additional days for in-person learning, only if:

- We have sufficient staffing levels to follow health/safety procedures and meet the needs of students.
- We have the ability to maintain compliance with the guidance from VDH/AOE.
- VDH guidance and data continues to support an increase to more in-person instruction.

Although these benchmarks were developed collaboratively, the decisions, timelines, and plans will be determined locally, not as a region. Each district has a unique set of circumstances as it relates to the benchmarks and must plan accordingly. CSD will continue assessing our readiness for increasing in-person learning at the elementary level, however, **we do not anticipate bringing additional students**

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**back in the immediate future.** Over the next few weeks, we will be further evaluating our systems, staffing levels, and continuing to monitor public health data. In early October we will let you know of a potential timeline to bring our elementary students back to campus. At this time, students in grades 6-12 will remain in a hybrid learning model for the foreseeable future.

Last but not least, another reminder to families who could use some extra help to fill out a [Free & Reduced Meal Application](#). The application process is quick, easy, and completely online. It is even mobile-friendly so you can complete it using your cell phone. Right now meals are free for everyone, but that's only while the federal funding lasts. Once it runs out, we will begin charging again. We want to make sure families can continue receiving free meals without a delay in coverage. Also, several of our programs for students are funded through federal grant money that we receive based on how many families in our district qualify for free or reduced meals. Filling out an application will help us to continue to support those important academic support programs. If you think you might qualify, please fill out an application today. Only one application is needed per family, even if your children attend more than one school in the district: [www.myschoolapps.com](http://www.myschoolapps.com)

Be well,

Amy Minor  
Superintendent of Schools