



Colchester School District

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October 30, 2020

CSD Community,

It's been nearly a month since we last communicated with families from a district level. We know that our schools have been sending home lots of information and that families and teachers at our elementary level have been adjusting to the shift to 4 day per week instruction. The amount of information coming home can be overwhelming and we try to be very intentional with our district letters. If we're sending one, it's because we have some important information to share. Thank you in advance for taking the time to look through it.

STAFFING

As you may have seen on the news this week, regional superintendents have put out a plea to those in our community looking for work to consider working for our schools. Colchester is among those districts. We have a number of unfilled positions as well as a great demand for substitutes, which leaves us in a precarious spot if our community were to see an uptick in cases resulting in teachers or staff needing to quarantine. If staffing levels were to drop as a result of staff quarantining, either due to holiday travel (which is being cautioned against given the current guidance and [travel map from the Vermont Department of Health](#)), contracting COVID, or having close contact with a COVID positive individual, we may not be able to continue conducting in-person instruction. If you know anyone who may be interested in working in our schools, either in a full-time position or as a substitute, please refer them to www.csdvt.org/jobs or www.csdvt.org/sub. They can also reach out to Amy Silverston, our HR Coordinator at amy.silverston@colchestersd.org or 264-5976.

TRAVEL: QUARANTINING AND MISSED SCHOOL WORK

After we turn our clocks back this week and flip the calendar to November, we have officially found ourselves approaching the holiday season. With the holidays often comes the desire and tradition of traveling to see friends and family. Every Tuesday, the state updates the [Cross-State Travel Map](#) which indicates what counties are "safe" to travel to, meaning they have low numbers and are marked green on the map, and which counties would require quarantine because they have higher numbers of cases, marked yellow and red on the map.

If you choose to travel to an area that is marked yellow or red, you must quarantine when you return to Vermont. This is for the safety of our whole community. Following these rules is crucial to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping our school buildings open for in-person instruction. For those who choose to travel to yellow or red counties, per the Vermont Department of Health, there are two

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options for quarantining when you return. Option A: 14-day quarantine or Option B: Taking a COVID-19 PCR test on day 7 if they are without any symptoms of COVID.

In terms of education and learning during your child's quarantine, our expectation is that your student will need to make up their missed learning when they are able to safely return to in-person instruction. During the global pandemic, we have worked hard to build capacity to support students in-person, through a hybrid model, or in some cases 100% remote. Creating these options have relied on hard work, creativity, and leveraging additional resources.

If students are directed to quarantine by the Department of Health because they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, reasonable efforts will be made to provide instruction and/or accommodations and supports, so that students can continue to access their education, if healthy enough to do so. Any absence will be considered 'approved.' However, if students are quarantining due to holiday or leisure travel, a student will miss in-person instruction and we are unable to guarantee that we will have the resources and ability to provide instruction and/or accommodations to access missed in-person instruction. In these cases, absences will be considered unexcused.

While we all want to get back to "normal" and to see family and friends that we miss dearly, ***we must prioritize the safety of our schools*** and the ability for us as a district to operationally meet the learning needs of a wide variety of circumstances. If your family is considering traveling this holiday season, please consider that your student may need to quarantine prior to returning to in-person instruction.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION TEST

Each fall, we test our emergency notification system, this year **we will conduct the test on Wednesday, November 11 at 6:00 pm**. This test will contact all of the phone numbers and emails that we have on file for your student. It will also send a text message to those who have signed up to receive them. *(Text notifications are not automatic. If you would like to sign up for text message notifications, text the letter "Y" or the word "Yes" to 67587.)*

The district is committed to providing factual and timely information in the event of an emergency or school closure and uses a program called School Messenger to communicate with families simultaneously via phone, text, and email. Most commonly, this system is used to announce a school closure in the event of poor weather conditions. Decisions about weather-related school closures will be made as early as possible, typically before 6:00 a.m. This notification system is also used to contact families in the event of a school-hours emergency.

Notifications go out to all families using the contact information on file with the district. If you would like to update or change your contact information in advance of this test or if you do not receive a call/email/text during the test and feel you should have, please contact the front office at the school your child attends to review your information. We will send out a reminder as it gets closer.

VIRTUAL FAMILY NIGHTS

The Colchester School District is hosting monthly virtual Family Nights with local experts covering a variety of topics including resilience, anxiety, fostering connections, and promoting independence in children. The next Family Night is "Safe and Sound", hosted by Gillian Boudreau on Tuesday, November 24th from 6:00 - 8:30 pm. She will focus on fostering a connection during difficult times to support resilience with children on the spectrum. [Click here to view the full flyer](#) which includes zoom links to the upcoming and future presentations. We'll send out a reminder when it gets closer.

UPDATES TO THE SCHOOL CALENDAR

To meet the minimum number of school days required by the state, we have continued to tweak the calendar. While the most recent change (March 19 explained below) won't have a big effect on family planning, we did just want to bring it to your attention and also highlight a few upcoming notes. [You can view and print the full calendar here.](#)

- **There is no school this coming Tuesday, November 3rd. There will also be no meal delivery.** The following day, Wednesday, November 4th, will remain unchanged and will be a remote learning day for all students. Meals will be delivered on Wednesday.
- We've added a student day on Friday, March 19. This day was previously listed as an in-service day for teachers but will now be a school day for all grades, Prek-12.
- Our anticipated last day of school is Friday, June 11, 2020. As with everything this year, this date is subject to change and we will keep you updated! The [online school calendar](#) is always updated with every change so it is always accurate if you want to check at any time this school year.

VERMONT TEACHER OF THE YEAR

We are incredibly proud to share that CHS English Learner Teacher Susan Rosato was recently named Vermont Teacher of The Year. This is a huge honor for Sue and the district. Mrs. Rosato has taught English Learners (EL) in the Colchester School District for more than 15 years. To accommodate increasing enrollment and needs of EL students in Colchester, she was instrumental in growing the program from her initial position as one of two part-time EL teachers covering the entire district to three full-time and one part-time teacher. Ms. Rosato currently serves as EL teacher at Colchester High School. She collaborates with classroom teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and administrators to teach her students who are often immigrants and refugees, and support them and their families as they navigate the education system and community life in Colchester.

As the 2021 Vermont Teacher of the Year, Ms. Rosato will serve as an advocate for the teaching profession, education and students. She is also Vermont's candidate for the 2021 National Teacher of the Year award and will represent Vermont next spring for the National Teacher of the Year program, typically held in Washington D.C.

Be well,

Amy Minor
Superintendent of Schools