



# Colchester School District

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November 13, 2020

Dear CSD Families,

Here are a few updates from around the district.

## **Physical Distancing in Grades K-5**

Last week we shared an overview of the updated guidance from the State that's going into effect on Monday. Getting our district into compliance with these new standards has been a tremendous undertaking. While PPS and MBS received all of their new student desks, we ran into several hiccups this week including an unexpected delay with our individual desk order at UMS. Without the desks, UMS would be out of compliance.

Administrators, teachers, and staff across the district spent countless hours brainstorming, troubleshooting, measuring distances, and testing ideas. We are borrowing some furniture from PPS and MBS to help support UMS. Our custodians and maintenance staff have been assembling and moving furniture at lightning speed to get us ready for Monday. I cannot thank our employees enough for their collaborative efforts over the last two weeks.

## **New Limitations on Social Gatherings**

Governor Phil Scott and Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, reported that the number of new COVID-19 cases reported statewide increased at a rate as high as 50% per day. The Vermont Department of Health attributes the surge to a number of factors, primarily informal social gatherings both indoors and outdoors, among people of different households. In response to a substantial jump in cases and outbreaks throughout the State, the Governor updated the Executive Order to limit any social, recreational and entertainment gatherings to those in a single household. Contact tracers have documented events that have contributed to COVID-19 transmission in Vermont, including holiday parties, birthday parties, dinner parties, baby showers and barbecues. It is the State's hope that making these sacrifices now will help flatten the sharp upward curve we're experiencing and that by doing so we can keep Vermonters working and our children in school.

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Superintendent  
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**George Trieb**  
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Director of Student  
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## **Holiday Travel**

With that in mind, there has also been significant discussion about limiting travel and gathering for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. The Vermont Department of Health has developed a [Holiday Travel School Toolkit](#) to help schools communicate about safety during the upcoming holidays. Right now, social gatherings are a driving force behind much of the COVID-19 spread nationwide. Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, encourages Vermonters to avoid out-of-state travel which now requires quarantining upon return, regardless of the destination.

Understanding that this is a difficult message to share, the Health Department created this toolkit, which includes social media posts with images, sample newsletter drop-in information and printable fact sheets to share with staff and parents.

## **Thanksgiving Food Drive**

We are still in need of donations for the Thanksgiving Food Drive! The food that we receive goes directly [to families in our district who otherwise would not be able to provide a Thanksgiving meal](#) for their families. We also include food for the week to help feed the students while they're not able to access school meals. If you're headed to the grocery store this weekend or you have some extra items in your pantry, please send them in with your student or drop them off at the school or Central Office next week. We ask that donations be in by Thursday so we have time to sort, pack, and deliver the baskets on Friday. Thank you in advance for your support and generosity.

## **Antibody Study Sign Up Reminder**

There is one week left for families and employees who attend school in-person for at least 2 days per week to participate in a SARS-CoV-2 antibody research study. The goal of the study is to see how many children and school staff may have already been infected by COVID-19 and to see if that number changes during the school year. Details on the study can be found in last week's email or by using the link below. If you are interested in signing up for this study, please click on the following link. All interested participants must **complete the enrollment process by next Friday, November 20.**

**Registration Link:** <https://redcap.med.uvm.edu/surveys/?s=7XYERCPYM4>

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Dr. Bullis or Dr. Lee using the contact numbers below.

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**Surveillance Testing for Employees**

Lastly, we wanted to let our families know of a new statewide initiative to test all interested school employees for COVID-19 on a monthly basis. Employee testing is voluntary and it is important to note that school employees have been selected for this surveillance testing not because they are at higher risk for contracting the virus, but because it is part of a larger public health strategy. Employees do not need to quarantine while they are awaiting surveillance test results per the Vermont Department of Health.

Be well,

Amy Minor  
Superintendent of Schools