



Colchester School District

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December 4, 2020

Dear CSD Families,

Just before the Thanksgiving break, CSD took part in the state's surveillance testing initiative to offer COVID-19 testing to all school employees in Vermont. CSD conducted 277 tests and all came back negative. As a state, of the 9,389 tests conducted a total of 21 came back positive. I'd like to extend my sincerest appreciation to our employees, families, and students for making sacrifices and not traveling or gathering over the long holiday weekend. We have adjusted well back to school and we are in the home stretch of the first semester with just two and a half weeks before we break for winter recess.

The Fate of Snow Days

The very existence of the beloved "snow day" is at stake this year and has been a hot topic among districts in Vermont and across the country as each school leader contemplates what they'll do when the first significant snowstorm comes. With remote learning now being something that all students and employees are familiar with, it does give us the option to nix snow days altogether and pivot to remote learning on days of inclement weather. However, we here at CSD believe in preserving the cherished childhood joy of getting an unexpected day off. A day for kids to be kids, regardless if they're a fully virtual or in-person learner. To get a break, play in the snow, drink hot cocoa, read a book and watch a movie. Now, that being said, if this winter ends up being particularly snowy, we will monitor the number of snow days used early on and we may consider turning any late winter/early spring snow days into remote learning days. But for now, we encourage any and all night-before snow day wishes and rituals.

Multi-household Gathering Reminder

By sending your student to school, or coming to work as a CSD employee, you are verifying that you are in compliance with the current Governor's order. This includes no longer gathering socially with people outside of your household. We trust our employees and families, and we expect that our Colchester community will do the right thing by monitoring their own activities related to multi-household gatherings and travel, and quarantine in accordance with the guidance. The Agency of Education recently clarified that gathering in pre-established "pods" related to education and/or child care remains allowable, however, pods related to a social activity or informal playgroups are prohibited at this time.

Status of Increasing In-person Learning Days at CMS and CHS

The physical distancing guidance for students in grades 7-12 is remaining at six feet. This means the only way that classrooms at CMS and CHS can be in compliance with the state's guidance is

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by staying in a hybrid model. We simply do not have the space to bring students back full time while keeping them spaced six feet apart. The guidance allows students in 6th grade to be spaced three feet apart instead of six feet, however, with our 6th graders being housed alongside 7th and 8th grade, there are a number of unique and significant challenges that would arise by having two sets of distancing expectations for students located in the same building. At this time, all students in grades 6-12 will remain in the hybrid model and spaced six feet apart. As with any of our reopening plans, we will continue to assess this decision, but for the next few months, families should plan for the hybrid model to remain in place as is.

Winter Sports

It was confirmed at today's press conference with the governor and state officials that winter sports are still on hold. They are continuing to monitor case counts and are holding onto some optimism that Vermonters will adhere to the public health guidelines so that the sports season may begin. We will continue to keep our students, families and coaches informed as information becomes available.

Be well,

Amy Minor
Superintendent of Schools