



Colchester School District

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October 20, 2021

CSD Community,

Here are a few updates, notifications, and requests for families and staff.

Important Upcoming Districtwide Dates and Reminders

- Wednesday, November 10: Emergency Notification Test
- No holidays, conferences, or professional development until Thanksgiving Recess in November.
- For the full calendar, visit www.csdvt.org/calendar.

Emergency Notification Test

The district will be conducting an annual routine test of our emergency notification system on Wednesday, November 10 at 6:00 pm. The test will contact all of the phone numbers and emails that we have on file for parents/guardians. 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 "Yes" to 67587.)*

Most commonly, our emergency notification 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.

The test notification will 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 of your school or meghan.baule@colchestersd.org.

Listening Forums

As part of our ongoing efforts to uphold our commitment to equitable and inclusive schools, we have been holding listening forums with students who self-identify as immigrant, refugee, new American, and/or BIPOC. We are grateful to be partnering with [Paul Suk-Hyun Yoon](#) and [Michael Hill Jr](#) who are helping to facilitate the forums.

Our first forums occurred on Oct 13th at CHS, and the feedback has been positive. Tomorrow, CMS students will also have an opportunity to participate. This feedback is very important to our equity planning, and we look forward to more opportunities for students, parents, and community members to

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engage with us as we work to ensure that our schools are positive and inclusive environments for all of our learners. When we have the report back from Paul and Mike, we will work as a district to respond to the feedback and will communicate with families and students as we proceed. Click here for [frequently asked questions](#) and feel free to contact jamilah.vogel@colchestersd.org to learn more.

Stay Home When Sick

Our school nurses are reporting that we still have a large number of students coming to school when they are sick. Nurses are then tied up triaging their symptoms, isolating them away from other students, calling the family, and waiting for the student to be picked up. With everything else our nurses are tasked with this year, we cannot stress enough to *please* keep your child home if they are showing symptoms, even if they are vaccinated. And if a nurse does call you to discuss the health of your child, please be kind. We are doing the best we can to keep our learning environments healthy.

Voluntary Weekly Testing

The district tested nearly 700 individuals this week as part of the weekly testing program. We are pleased to report that none of the tests came back positive. We will offer testing again next Monday. If you'd like to sign your child up, you must fill out [this online consent form](#) by Friday.

Additional COVID-19 Testing Options

The state is setting up three additional testing options for schools to offer to their communities. None of these testing programs are available just yet; we are waiting for the state to finalize the consent process, distribute the necessary supplies, and provide training. All COVID testing options offered by the district are voluntary and will require parental consent to participate. Here's a brief overview of the three options. We will share more details on each program once they are ready to go.

- **Test to Stay Program**

The goal behind this program is to reduce the time that quarantined students are away from school. Test to Stay is for unvaccinated individuals, with no symptoms, who have been identified as close contacts. Instead of quarantining and doing school work at home, students would be provided a rapid-results antigen test to take each morning and can attend school that day with a negative result. They would do this each day during their quarantine period. It is important to note that vaccinated close contacts do not need to quarantine, and therefore should not participate in the Test to Stay Program.

- **In-School PCR Response Testing**

There are a couple of uses for this option. Primarily, it may reduce the need to arrange testing at an alternative site. For example, if a student develops symptoms while at school, the nurse could test them before they are sent home. This option would also allow schools to test vaccinated close contacts between the recommended 3-5 days of exposure.

- **Take-Home PCR Tests**

As simple as it sounds. Schools would be able to give out take-home test kits to families and staff. The tests are self-administered and include a shipping box and a pre-paid shipping label.

As soon as we have a clear timeline on when each of these testing options will be available in our district, we will follow up and share that information. [Click here to learn more about each testing option.](#)

TikTok Challenges

School districts across the country are responding to theft and vandalism of school property and other concerning behaviors after students started posting videos of themselves on TikTok completed destructive challenges.

The September TikTok challenge was to steal objects and vandalize bathrooms at their school. Unfortunately, this trend made its way into Colchester and our bathrooms did sustain damage. While TikTok challenges may seem like an innocent prank to students, they can have serious consequences. Additional TikTok challenges are planned for the rest of the school year, including those that promote physical violence against educators and school staff, vandalism, and even physical/sexual assault. These TikToks are much more than challenges; they are criminal offenses.

We ask that you speak to your children about social media, current trends taking place, and how these temporary fads can ultimately impact their future. We want our students and staff to take pride in our schools by respecting the property and each other. If your child has any information on these occurrences at school, please encourage them to speak to their principal or another trusted adult. [Common Sense Media](#) is a great resource for families. We also recommend reviewing this [TikTok Guide for Parents](#) and TikTok's [Community Guidelines](#) that outline for you how to report inappropriate content.

Be well,

Amy Minor
Superintendent of Schools