

Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools



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Dear Hastings Families,

I am writing with a rare midweek update on COVID-19. As you read, please remember the fact that we continue to be a healthy and safe school district, with in-person learning the daily reality for nearly all children. Our success to date in maintaining in-person schooling is because all of us have worked hard to adhere to the COVID-19 mitigation measures.

I have three updates to our procedures. The first two will take effect immediately, the third speaks to a new procedure we hope to implement with clearance from Westchester County.

1. COVID-19 Positive Students Will Be Allowed to Livestream — We now will allow COVID-19 positive students to livestream while out of school. We have been limiting the livestream (remote) option to quarantined students. Data now show that we have very few COVID-19 positive cases, so adding a small number of students into what is a larger group of quarantined students on a livestream is a logical step. The procedures for joining a livestream are outlined in the [2021-22 COVID-19 Management Plan](#) (see page seven). Please understand that the livestream option is available only to students affected by COVID-19: either due to being quarantined or with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
2. Quarantine Length Must Revert to 10 Days — We regret that we have to revert to the ten-day quarantine period for all students and staff who have been required to quarantine. We had instituted a seven-day option (which is dependent on a PCR test taken on day five of the quarantine being negative and the individual being asymptomatic). Unfortunately, the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH) has not yet provided the anticipated approval of the reduced quarantine. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has allowed local health districts to adopt the practice. Thus, the WCDOH, as our local health district, is the ultimate arbiter on the length of quarantines and when students or staff may return to school when quarantined.

We are monitoring the WCDOH position closely. If they approve the seven-day option, we will implement it immediately. Families with students and staff currently in quarantine were individually advised that the seven-day option may revert to ten days during their quarantine period; that has now occurred. We wish this were not the case, but we have to adhere to the directives of the WCDOH.

3. Test-to-Stay Still On-Hold — We are prepared to start a Test-to-Stay program for any students in quarantine. However, we continue to await clearance from the WCDOH. In short, this program would allow those students on quarantine to receive a COVID-19 test

at school in the morning, and if they test negative remain in school. (Students would still have to quarantine when away from school, and they would have to receive transportation to school in the morning for the test.) This program has worked well in neighboring states, but cannot be instituted without WCDOH clearance.

Lastly, you may be aware that in the last 24 hours Westchester County declared a State of Emergency regarding COVID-19. This action follows a similar step by Governor Hochul for the entire state. Superintendents heard directly from George Latimer, Westchester County Executive, on Monday morning that he is taking this step as a precautionary measure in case COVID-19 rates become problematic for the region. While he has not instituted any new steps to mitigate COVID-19, the State of Emergency allows him to move quickly if need be. Mr. Latimer will work with superintendents on any new measures that may affect school — none are currently anticipated, and his agreement to confer with us is essential.

Most important, Mr. Latimer stressed that, while infection rates are again rising, we are in a much stronger place than in the past, due to high levels of vaccinations, success in schools at masking and physical distancing, and an understanding among the majority of Westchester County residents of the need to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Mr. Latimer and the superintendents across the County are committed to ensuring that in-person schooling continues all school year.

We will keep you updated on any new developments and guidance. In the meantime, keep focused on the fact we are a healthy and safe school district, enjoying the success of in-person schooling. Masking, vaccinations and physical distancing matter greatly, as does staying home when you do not feel well.

Be well.

Bill

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