

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

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Ms. Alisha DiCorpo
Superintendent of Schools

January 4, 2022

Dear NMPS Families and Staff,

I hope everyone had a restful, healthy New Year. As we approached the first day back from vacation, it was a busy one for the administration as we worked to fully staff the schools and prepare for students' return. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will continue to work hard to keep schools open while exercising the mitigation strategies that we've been employing since the beginning of this school year. We feel that these strategies have afforded students the opportunity to stay in school as much as possible. We ask for your continued support with the state-required mask-wearing mitigation strategy for schools. Please remind children to keep their masks on, on transportation as well as during the school day.

I recognize that a great deal of information has been coming your way over the last few days and the administration is grateful for your patience as we work to learn more about the state guidance on remote learning, quarantine, and contact tracing, as well as the distribution of masks for staff and testing kits for all. Below you will find a summary of the updates and implementation strategies that we will be putting into effect now. Since there may necessitate the need for updates or changes to this information, we ask that you remain flexible as we navigate the implementation.

UPDATES:

Contact tracing:

As you may have heard, the State issued updated guidance for districts to consider which has eliminated the requirement for contact tracing. This morning, I attended a scheduled meeting with the State Department of Public Health to learn more about the guidance. Based on the infrequent identification of person-to-person transmission of COVID inside school buildings, it is the position of the CT DPH that *routine contact tracing* of individual exposures that occur inside schools or during school-organized activities *can be discontinued*. As such, the protocols established for contact tracing and "Screen and Stay" will no longer take place.

We recognize that the current infection rates in our community are high and we are aware that staff and families would like us to continue to provide notification of positive cases. Therefore, we will continue to notify you of positive cases, however, the way in which the news will be communicated will change. Because individual-level contact tracing is a tool that becomes less effective when community transmission is high, DPH recommends that schools begin to refocus the activities of health staff away from the investigation of relatively low-risk in-school exposures and toward the identification, early isolation, and clinical management of students and staff with active symptoms that could be related to Covid-19.

School communication will report positive cases in the following manner:

- Elementary School - Parents/Guardians will be notified of positive cases by grade level.
- Middle School - Parents/Guardians will be notified of positive cases by grade level.
- High School/Litchfield Hills - Due to the nature of the high school, parents/guardians will be notified of all cases.
- We will also maintain our Covid dashboard with total weekly cases here: <https://www.newmilfordps.org/covid19updates>

Quarantine Updates:

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) advises at this time that it is appropriate to allow school districts the choice to make changes in their operating rules regarding quarantine, isolation, testing, and return to in-school activities. These suggested changes are designed to focus on the increased risk from individuals reporting for school-related activities with active symptoms of illness and the decreased risk for and from individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

In brief:

- Individuals who are even mildly symptomatic with any of the symptoms associated with COVID- 19 should immediately isolate at home, test for the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) with a PCR, antigen, or self-test, and remain away from activities outside of the home until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours and other symptoms are significantly improved.
- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home for at least 5 days, or longer if symptoms develop and persist. A mask should continue to be worn for an additional 5 days at all times when around others.
- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals who are notified that they have had close contact with an individual who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should immediately quarantine at home and test for the virus 5 days after their last exposure to the COVID-19 case. This is especially important in situations where extended high-intensity exposure may have occurred, such as with household contacts, in unmasked social settings (e.g., sleepovers, parties), and/or during athletic activities.
- If your child is currently out due to being COVID positive OR identified as close contact, your school will contact you with instructions. Please be patient as this may take some time. If you don't hear from your child's school by Friday, please contact the school directly. The nurse's contact information is listed below for your reference.
- Staff should contact their building principal for further instructions for return.

School	Nurse	Email
NES	PJ Farquharson	farquharsonp@newmilfordps.org
HPS	Jobi Bieluch	bieluchj@newmilfordps.org
SNIS	Dawn Arnold	arnoldd@newmilfordps.org
SMS	Mary Orcutt and Adrienne Williams	orcuttm@newmilfordps.org williamsa@newmilfordps.org
NMHS	Linda Westlake and Debbie Meeker	westlakel@newmilfordps.org meekerd@newmilfordps.org

LHTC	Linda Westlake and Debbie Meeker	westlaket@newmilfordps.org meekerd@newmilfordps.org
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Self-Testing Kits:

To help curb the transmission of COVID-19, the State of Connecticut is distributing the first phase of Self-Test Kits (“kits”) to public and private schools throughout the state. Kits will be made available for Pre K-12 students and school staff. Kits were delivered to a regional location today and were picked up by our Facilities department and are expected to be available in schools as soon as Wednesday, January 5, 2022.

The state has distributed iHealth and FlowFlex test kits to districts/schools for use by students and staff. It is possible that other brand tests may be made available in the future. Each kit has detailed instructions for parents and staff to follow. Generally, FlowFlex kits will be allocated for staff; iHealth kits can only be used for students.

Each district has been allocated a predetermined number of kits based on their total student and staff population. Phase 1 is less than half of the total allocation needed. This means that New Milford will not have a test kit for every staff member and student during Phase 1.

The CSDE is providing these kits to help further protect staff, children, and families. The rapid home tests are to be used to screen **those who are symptomatic**, to determine who should not be present in school. The test kits are provided to address these 3 needs:

- If a child or staff person exhibits symptoms and needs to be screened for COVID-19;
- If a child or staff member has direct exposure to an individual with COVID-19;
- If a class or program is experiencing multiple cases of COVID-19 and students in that classroom have difficulty accessing tests.

Each district/school will distribute available tests to staff and families based on these needs. They will not be sent home but rather distributed on a case-by-case basis using the criteria above until supplies have been exhausted. Student kits will be kept in the nurse’s office and staff kits will be kept with the building administrator. Both student and staff kits will require a signature for sign-out.

For students or staff that have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days, there is no need to test for COVID-19 again. These individuals do not need to be prioritized for test distribution.

If your child tests positive, it is essential that you report the positive test result to your school nurse. Children with negative test results who have no symptoms and no known exposure to COVID-19 should return to in-person learning. For additional information about self-tests, please refer to [CDC guidance on Self-Testing.](#)

Athletics:

Currently, none of the recent DPH flexibilities have been applied to athletics, however, we expect to receive additional information in the future. In the interim, we will continue to follow the most recent CIAC guidance in the coming weeks. You can find the CIAC guidance here: <http://www.casciac.org/pdfs/CIACMemoUpdatedWinterSportMaskGuidance12-22-2021.pdf>

Remote learning:

Over the last few days, we have received a few questions about remote learning. On Friday, the State Department of Education clarified the questions around remote learning for districts. This is only an option if approved by the State Department of Health or called through the Governor’s

Office and is only an option when specific circumstances are met. It is not at the discretion of individual districts. You can find the updated guidance here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hTHIU_U0pA85ID9CJNur1bsmIXMahuQi/view?usp=sharing

Transportation:

Thank you for your continued patience as we work with All-Star daily to navigate transportation runs that may be impacted due to the national bus driver shortage as well as illness. We are working hard to notify families as soon as we become aware. Please note that it does take us time to launch each announcement to families who are impacted and we are working to get you the information as quickly as is possible.

On a call this morning with the State, superintendents were told that the CDC may be releasing updated guidance today. If there are any changes from the State guidance that we are instituting now, we will send another update.

Finally, I wish to thank you for your continued partnership as we work together to keep our community safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alisha DiCorpo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alisha DiCorpo
Superintendent