



## **The Public Schools of Northborough and Southborough**

*Ten Schools, Three Districts, One Community of Learners*

Dear Parent(s), Guardian(s), Faculty, and Staff:

After twenty-two months we know the course of the pandemic is ever-changing. We also know that many strategies to keep ourselves as low risk as possible have not changed. Since the beginning we have known that the following mitigation measures help minimize our risk:

- Wearing a well-fitted, multi-layered mask
- Distancing as much as possible
- Proper hand hygiene
- Staying home and testing if you have symptoms

As the case counts in our state, towns, and schools continue to dramatically increase it is imperative that we continue to diligently employ these strategies. We cannot stress enough that it is critical to our continued operation that sick students/staff, even with mild symptoms, stay home from school and contact the school nurse.

The last few weeks have been particularly challenging for our schools, students, staff, and families as we adapt to the surge of cases and the changes in guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Public Health (DPH), and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Given the enormity and scope of contact tracing within the community, local Boards of Health are prioritizing contact tracing to those at greatest risk for adverse outcomes. It is now a public health expectation that those who test positive share this news with anyone with whom they have been in contact with. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the school nurses and the towns' public health nurses have collaborated to contact trace for our students/families both in school and outside of school. This has not changed.

Two years into this pandemic, our school nurses have continued to diligently contact trace and inform our families of positive COVID-19 cases within our school community. We have certainly reached a point where the origin of transmission is difficult to determine and we can assume that transmission could be happening in the community, in households, and also in school. Based on community transmission rates, we ask that you assume that you have been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual, and report to nursing if you have any symptoms of COVID-19.

As the virus continues to change, we need to continually adapt our strategies. With the dramatic increase in cases, our contact tracing protocols required adjustments. We have discussed these changes with the Medical Advisory Team (MAT) which consists of the school administration, nurse leader, school physician, physicians, and the directors and staff from both town's Boards of Health.

### **CONTACT TRACING**

We will be contact tracing for our highest-risk populations.

Nursing teams will continue to collaborate with the local Board of Health teams and will utilize their triage skills to determine when contact tracing is needed.

We will be making the following changes to COVID-19 contact tracing and notification effective immediately:

ARHS:

- Nurses will contact trace for lunch.
  - This is done via an interview with the student.
  - All close contacts will be notified and advised.
- Nurses will contact trace for the positive individual on a sports team or in a school-sponsored club/activity.
  - This is done via an interview with the student and with the coach/supervisor.
  - All close contacts will be notified and advised.
- We have requested that classroom default set up be desks in rows spaced as much as possible and that group work be limited at this time to minimize the contact that happens in the classroom.
- If a teacher is concerned about cases in their class or notes a cluster of cases in a class please contact the nursing team and we will investigate.
  - If contact tracing is conducted, all close contacts will be notified and advised.

Melican Middle School:

- Nurses will contact trace for lunch.
  - This is done using the assigned seating chart.
  - All close contacts will be notified and advised.
- Nurses will contact trace for the positive individual on a sports team or in a school-sponsored club/activity.
  - This is done via an interview with the student and with the coach/supervisor.
  - All close contacts will be notified and advised.
- We have requested that classroom default set up be desks in rows spaced as much as possible and that group work be limited at this time to minimize the contact that happens in the classroom.
- If a teacher is concerned about cases in their class or notes a cluster of cases in a class please contact the nursing team and we will investigate.
  - If contact tracing is conducted, all close contacts will be notified and advised

Trottier Middle School

- Lunch seating is spaced at six feet so contact tracing is not required at lunch.
- Nurses will contact trace for the positive individual on a sports team or in a school-sponsored club/activity.
  - This is done via an interview with the student and with the coach/supervisor.
  - All close contacts will be notified and advised.
- We have requested that classroom default set up be desks in rows spaced as much as possible and that group work be limited at this time to minimize the contact that happens in the classroom.
- If a teacher is concerned about cases in their class or notes a cluster of cases in a class please contact the nursing team and we will investigate.
  - If contact tracing is conducted, all close contacts will be notified and advised.

## Elementary Classrooms

- Lunch seating is spaced at six feet so contact tracing is not required at lunch.
- Nurses will contact trace for the elementary classroom.
  - Close contacts will be notified and advised.
  - General notification will be sent to the elementary classroom.
- We have requested that space in the classroom be maximized and group work be limited at this time to minimize the contact that happens in the classroom.

## TESTING:

Test and stay will continue for unvaccinated/partially vaccinated in-school close contacts. Weekly Covid Safety Checks (pool testing) will continue on the first day of the school week (typically Mondays, if Monday is a day off, testing will happen on Tuesdays). If you have not previously signed up and you wish for your child to start taking part in this weekly PCR testing, you can sign up [HERE](#).

Vaccination clinics for COVID-19 will continue to be held for all those choosing to be vaccinated and boosted. You can find more information about upcoming clinics [HERE](#).

The District continues to track cases and is committed to keeping the risk of in-school transmission low, so please stay home if you are sick and notify the school nurse.

If you or anyone in your household tests positive, please inform your child's school nurse so that we can discuss dates for returning to school. If your child tests positive with a home test, please let your school nurse know and complete [this form](#).

[The COVID-19 Dashboard](#) will continue to be updated each week. Families are encouraged to check this dashboard weekly to see the District's most up-to-date COVID-19 numbers.

be well ~ be safe,

Mary Ellen Duggan RN  
District Wellness Coordinator/Nurse Leader