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*Committed to cultivating within all our students the knowledge, skills, and character essential to becoming purposeful, productive and engaged members of their world.*

September 9, 2021

Dear CVSU Parents and Staff,

Over the past week, I have had the pleasure of visiting all CVSU schools to greet students and staff back to campuses for a new year of learning. It has been a joy seeing excited students welcomed back by passionate and energetic teachers and staff. Despite the excitement and energy, I do understand there is still much concern over COVID-19 in our communities and the safety measures implemented across our schools. I hope this letter clarifies CVSU's current practices and the steps we are taking to limit the spread of this virus in our schools.

The Agency of Education (AOE) and Vermont Department of Health (VDH) continue to emphasize a three pronged strategy to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. CVSU schools will continue to adhere to this guidance.

- If you are sick, stay home.
- Masks will be required universally when indoors,
- Regular testing and quarantining of exposed individuals when necessary

This week, I met with Principals to review our COVID-19 safety measures and ensure we are consistently implementing our practices as developed. Each of our COVID-19 safety measures, along with concerns shared with me by community members were reviewed as a team. The following direction came out of our meeting.

Masks are the number one mitigation measure currently in place in our schools. Our current mask policy requires the use of a 2-layer mask. Students and staff must wear a double-layered mask at all times. Single layer gaiter/buffs or gaiters with venting through one or more layers cannot be worn during the school day. If your child (or staff) arrives with a face covering that is not in compliance with the current mask guidelines, a mask will be provided to them for the school day.

Although physical distancing is not required under the current guidance, I have asked school principals to review their mealtime seating procedures and determine if additional steps can be taken to physically distance students during meals. Principals reported they are addressing concerns by having students eat in their own classrooms, spreading out lunchtime services over multiple periods to limit the number of students in the cafeteria at any one time, and providing outdoor seating for lunch when practicable. I

have also asked principals to speak with school staff to maximize physical distancing of students during snacks and meals in the classroom as much as possible.

Administration has also been asked to review mask guidelines with staff and increase enforcement of appropriate mask selection and use. I am asking teachers to stay diligent in enforcing proper mask use in their own classrooms, continue to provide reminders (and scheduled time in the lower grades) for hand washing, and limit close interactions between classes when indoors.

Although we are not mandating physical distancing and cohorting of classes, we all must remain cognizant of the fact that COVID is active in our communities and we should continue to take extra precautions.

Our school nurses have participated in training on the state's surveillance testing program in school and will begin our first round of surveillance testing on October 5.

I have heard from parents and staff over concern with the state's guidance to allow vaccinated individuals who have come into close contact with a positive COVID case to continue to work or attend school. We are again adhering to the current guidelines set forth by the department of health on these matters.

Our start to the school year has not been without challenges. In the past week, we have had a positive COVID case at two of our schools, Northfield Elementary and Williamstown Elementary School. Upon notification of a positive case, staff worked quickly to identify students who had "close contact" as defined by the Vermont Department of Health, notified families, and placed those close contacts under quarantine. To date, we have zero confirmed transmissions of the virus within our schools.

If you were not notified directly from the principal or school nurse, your child was not identified as a close contact. In the [Vermont Department of Health information published on 9/2/2021](#), close contact means being within 6 feet, for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period, of someone with COVID-19 during their infectious period. The guidance details different requirements for quarantining depending on vaccination status and symptomology.

We are continuing to maintain seating charts on busses, in classrooms, and in the cafeteria to ensure all 'close contacts' are identified and contacted as soon as we have knowledge of a positive case.

Although we continue to follow guidance from the AOE and VDH, we are reviewing our practices on a weekly basis to ensure the appropriate steps are being taken for children and staff. If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to reach out to your child's principal, the CVSU COVID-19 Response Coordinator, or myself.

Sincerely,



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