



December 31, 2021

Dear Somerset and Somerset Berkley Families,

We hope everyone has had an enjoyable holiday break, enjoying time with family and friends while also finding time to relax. I would like to take this opportunity to share some updated information with you regarding COVID-19.

Throughout the month of December, we have reported 143 total COVID-19 cases in our schools so far, compared to 148 cases we had during the entire 2020-2021 school year. These numbers would surely be higher without the support of our families who have kept watchful eyes on our students and kept them home from school when they did not feel well. We are also very grateful for the open lines of communication that parents and guardians have maintained with our school nurses and principals when students have symptoms related to COVID-19.

Attached to this newsletter is the updated guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) based on the recent recommendations from the CDC. This new information has also been posted on the district website. One should consult this state document summarizing the various protocols that must be followed but a general summary of these protocols is below:

- For individuals who test positive for COVID-19:
 - Self-isolate for a minimum of 5 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.
 - Return to school after 5 days and once they have been without a fever for 24 hours and are asymptomatic; and
 - Adhere to strict mask use for an additional 5 days when around others.
- For individuals who are asymptomatic close contacts and are not exempt from testing and quarantine protocols:
 - Return to school on day 6 following a five-day quarantine provided that they remain asymptomatic;

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- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 10; and
- Adhere to strict mask use for an additional 5 days when around others.
- For individuals who are symptomatic, whether or not they are vaccinated, and have not tested positive for COVID-19:
 - Have received a negative PCR or antigen test result for COVID-19;
 - Are asymptomatic; and
 - Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 on or prior to December 28th may return to school since the five-day quarantine period would have been completed and assuming symptoms are resolved.

Individuals who tested positive from December 29th will not have completed the necessary isolation period of time in order to return to school on January 3. Please notify your school nurse who will be in contact with you on Monday.

Presently, the school district has the full intent to be open on Monday, January 3, 2022, and to welcome students and staff back to a new year. However, we are closely monitoring the positive case counts among our employees and will continue to do so throughout the weekend. If a significant number of faculty and staff will be absent on Monday due to illness we may have to prepare to cancel school as a result of a staffing shortage. Schools are not presently permitted by the state to offer remote learning options in lieu of a day of in-person learning.

Examples of measures taken to maintain safe and healthy learning environments, air filters in buildings were replaced this past week, KN95 masks will be distributed to employees, and at-home COVID-19 self-test kits will be distributed to staff this weekend. Somerset and Somerset Berkley will continue to do their part to help keep our students and staff healthy so that we all can experience a happy, healthy, successful, and fulfilling new year.

Sincerely,

Jeff Schoonover