

Continued Cancellation of In-Person Classes

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We hope that this message finds you all safe and well. As a school district, we have been closely monitoring local, state, and federal public health guidance and data regarding the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We were at a rate of 17.7 on November 5, 2020, which was in the red metric as shared by the state (<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Data-Tracker>). While this number was very concerning by itself, what is more concerning is that this number has almost doubled within one week and we are now at 32.0 as of November 12, 2020, which is extremely concerning for our community. Additionally, as you have read from our communications throughout week, we are still receiving notice of more confirmed cases amongst both students and staff. Our hearts and well wishes continue to go out to them and wish them a speedy recovery. These additional cases would have affected our ability to stay in school and in most cases; either several classrooms and or the entire building would have needed to be closed.

We also closely monitor health metrics in our region, across the Valley, and within our town to determine the level of positive Coronavirus cases. As you already know, the number of cases is significantly increasing in Connecticut. This is especially true in both New Haven County as well as throughout the Valley. As points of reference, New Haven County has reached a “high status” of 28.7 cases per 100,000 population per day. All of the towns in the Valley are also in the red: Ansonia at 36.2, Derby at 34.2, Naugatuck at 34.2, **Seymour at 32.0**, Shelton at 26.4, Beacon Falls at 24.3, and Oxford at 15.7.

After much continued consultation with our district doctor, the Chief of Pediatrics from Griffin Hospital, our Head Nurse, our Emergency Management Director, the Director of the Naugatuck Valley Health District, the Board Chair, The Board Vice Chair, and the First Selectwoman we have made the extremely difficult decision to extend the cancellation of in-person hybrid classes for all students and staff and to stay on remote learning until January 19, 2021. The rationale for this is twofold. First, this allows for our students and teachers to remain consistent on a singular learning platform without having to go back and forth between hybrid and full remote. This provides for a better continuity of learning for a shorter period of time. The second is to provide our school community two full weeks after the New Year to help ensure that any potential exposure that may take place during the holiday break be mitigated by being at home for those two weeks. Our in person hybrid learning will resume on Tuesday January 19, 2021. Please continue to do your part to help mitigate the spread of the virus while at home doing your remote learning. Please be cautious of social gatherings with people you may have not been exposed to. We look forward to seeing everyone back in person on Tuesday January 19, 2021.

The closure affects all school programming, including before- and after-school activities, all athletic and extracurricular practices and competitions, and all weekend events.

Please Note: Meals for students will continue to be available for pick-up at Seymour Middle School on Mondays from 12:00pm – 2:00pm, Wednesdays from 3:00 – 4:30, and on Thursdays from 12:00 – 2:00.

Our District teachers and staff have already been using the remote learning platform for our students, and as such, we want all students to log into their teacher's classroom as they normally would on their remote learning days. We will continue to follow our district calendar in terms of both full and half days. Building Administrators will continue to support our teachers and to provide strategies to improve instruction. Our additional Board approved half day Wednesdays will provide our teachers with the time needed to work together to improve instruction on the remote learning platform. If you have any questions, please contact your child's school administrator.

COVID-19 is spread mainly via person-to-person contact through contaminated air droplets from coughing and sneezing by an infected person. As with controlling the spread of other viruses, we urge everyone to take and speak to your children about the following preventive measures:

- Wash your hands frequently, but especially after using the restroom and before preparing or consuming food. Using soap and hot water, wash for about 20 seconds. Be sure to also wash your fingertips. When soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands or in the air. Always try to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze inside the elbow of your arm.
- As much as you can, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Wear a face covering (mask) whenever there is a likelihood that you or your family members will be in the presence of others.
- Maintain social distancing (at least 6 feet) between yourself and others when outside of your home.

Below is the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which everyone should monitor in their family members:

- Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher)
- Chills or shaking chills
- Uncontrolled new cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell

In addition to the previous symptoms, sore throat, muscle pain, nausea, vomiting, headache and diarrhea have also been associated with COVID-19.

For additional information on COVID-19 symptoms, please see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Staff and students exhibiting any of the above symptoms, or feeling ill, should remain home, call their medical provider to report their symptoms and ask about testing prior to seeking in-person care at a clinic, physician's office, or hospital.

For more information on what to do if you or a family member has possible symptoms, a diagnosis, or exposure to COVID-19, please see *Addendum 5: Interim Guidance for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios in Connecticut School Districts*, available here:

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/COVID19/COVID-19-Resources-for-Families-and-Educators/Addendums-and-FAQs>

We are closely monitoring this situation and working with Naugatuck Valley Health Department and will provide you with updates as we know more. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Michael Wilson, Superintendent
Vonda Tencza, Associate Superintendent