

# BOLTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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January 2, 2022

Dear Parents and Staff,

I hope you had time over the holiday break to relax, unwind, and enjoy time with your families. While we are certainly starting this year off with the pandemic in full swing, it is my hope that 2022 is a year filled with happiness, health, and peace for all of us.

## **COVID-19 Protocols Update**

On December 27, 2021 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released updated guidance regarding the appropriate duration of quarantine and isolation for COVID-19. Based on this updated guidance and the science supporting it, on December 31, 2021 the Connecticut DPH released [DPH School Contact Tracing, Testing, Isolation, and Quarantine Update 12-31-2021.pdf](#) for school districts that allows them the choice to make changes in their operating rules regarding quarantine, isolation, testing, and return to in-school activities. In general, these suggested changes shift the focus from contact tracing to isolating individuals with symptoms. After consulting with the Director of the Eastern Highlands Health District, the Bolton Public Schools will be implementing these changes unless conditions necessitate the move back to traditional quarantine, isolation, testing, and return to in-school activities procedures.

Q. What are the reasons that DPH made the changes?

A. There are a number of reasons (see the State guidance), but the three most important are the low numbers of confirmed, in-school transmissions, the significant number of hours nurses and administrators must dedicate to contact tracing, and the known and significant impact that quarantining has on both students and their families.

Q. What are the changes based on the recommendation of DPH and CSDE?

A1. Reduction of isolation from 10 to 5 days for all cases as long as the staff or student member is **fever free and major symptom free for 24 hours.**

A2. **Discontinue school based individual contact tracing.** Phone calls to individual families regarding cases of COVID-19 will no longer be made by the school district. We will continue to notify school communities by email that will now indicate daily the grade level(s) where the case(s) have occurred PK – 8 and school-level 9 – 12. In these cases parents should monitor for symptoms.

A3. Acceptable tests for the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) continue to include a PCR test and now include an antigen test or a self-test.

Q. Any changes to mitigation strategies?

A. No, our current mitigation strategies will continue, including mandatory wearing of masks for all staff, students, and visitors. We will continue to review the guidance from the state and update families if we have additional changes to our procedures.

Q. Are there any changes to after school activities or school sponsored sports?

A. No, all students, staff, and spectators are required to wear a mask during athletic practices and competitions and during after school activities.

- Q. What if I was told my child has to isolate or quarantine based on the previous guidance anytime between January 3 – 7, 2022?
- A. For students who are currently quarantining or isolating we understand that these changing guidelines may create some confusion as to when your child may return to school. Please be advised that each situation is unique. As such, you are asked to reach out to the school nurse tomorrow to determine when your child can return to school.
- Q. What do I do if I know my child has been a **close contact** of a positive case either in-school or outside of school?
- A. **Fully Vaccinated:** Your child may continue with in-person learning as long as they are symptom free. They should test on day 5 after exposure and report the results to the school nurse.
- Unvaccinated/Partially Vaccinated:** Quarantine for 5 days and notify the school of the contact. The school nurse and administration will review the information and determine eligibility for remote learning. Your child may return to school on day 6 only if they have been fever free and major symptom free for 24 hours prior to returning. They should test on day 5 after exposure and report the results to the school nurse.
- Q. What do I do if my child has any **COVID-19 symptoms**, but no known contact?
- A. Your child should **NOT** report to school regardless of vaccination status. Remain isolated at home, contact the school nurse, contact your primary health care provider, get tested, and do not return to school until fever free for 24 hours and no major symptoms (see list below).
- Fever above 100.4 when taken by mouth
  - Chills, muscle pain, body aches
  - Shortness of breath
  - Cough (or new uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing for students with chronic allergies/asthma)
  - Diarrhea, vomiting or abdominal pain
  - Sore throat
  - Congestion or runny nose
  - New onset of severe headache, especially with fever
  - Loss of taste or smell
- Q. What should I do if my child or myself as a BPS staff member test positive for COVID-19 from a PCR, antigen, or self-test?
- A. 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. Please note that the day following the positive test for COVID-19 is day one (1). Proof of a positive COVID-19 test is still required.
- Q. Can the district make the decision to go remote for all schools?
- A. No, over the break, the state reiterated that remote instruction this year is a decision made only by the state and requires action from either the Governor’s Office or the state legislature.
- Q. Will a school/district close if the number of cases continues to rise?

A. In general, no. The only reason we would close a school or the district would be due to a staffing issue and those days would need to be made up at the end of the school year. The district will continue to make decisions regarding classroom, team, or grade quarantining on a case by case basis. However, BPS has 181 days of school and since 180 days are required by statute, the district may utilize one weather related or illness closure as a remote learning day as determined by the Superintendent of Schools.

Q. Is there a remote option for students?

A. The only remote learning options allowed are for:

1. Those students who the nurse and administration have determined are eligible based on isolation or quarantining due to COVID-19. There is no voluntary, at-home learning option available as per state guidelines.
2. In rare and individualized circumstances, for students with live-in family members who have a documented unusual vulnerability to COVID-19.
3. In those rare cases in which a Planning and Placement Team determines that instruction in the home provides the student with a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment and revises the student's Individualized Education Program accordingly.

I urge you to continue to use the host of mitigation strategies below including:

1. Staying home when you feel sick.
2. Wearing a mask.
3. Maintaining social distancing when indoors.
4. Washing hands frequently or using hand sanitizer.

### **Town of Bolton COVID-19 Test Kit/N95 Mask Distribution**

The Town of Bolton has received a significantly reduced quantity of COVID-19 test kits and N95 masks. They will be holding a drive-through pick up where we will distribute one test kit (which contains two tests) and a box of masks per household while supplies last.

**Monday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

**Indian Notch Park (Tolland Road, Bolton)**

Residents are asked to remain in their vehicles and follow traffic up to the canopy for pick-up. Please DO NOT park and walk up. Kits and masks will only be given out to cars going through the line. Please be prepared to prove residency with a driver's license, or piece of mail with a Bolton address. If you cannot drive please contact the Senior Center on MONDAY at 860-647-9196 for alternative solutions. (A very small supply will be available). The Town of Bolton would like to thank you for your patience and understanding. When more test kits become available they will distribute them as quickly as possible.

Again, I want to thank you for your continued partnership as we face these challenging times together.

Stay safe and be well,

*Kristin B. Heckt*

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Superintendent of Schools