

Monday, November 23, 2020

Dear Chester, Deep River, Essex, and Region 4 School Communities,

As we prepare for the Thanksgiving holiday, I wanted to provide you with an update on the status and operations of our schools. After careful consideration and consultation with the Connecticut River Area Health District and the Town of Essex Health Department, we have decided to extend full-remote learning through Friday, December 4th in order to fully assess the public health metrics, the needs of our schools and communities, and to determine how to best proceed. We have made this decision in advance of the holiday to allow for our students, families and staff to plan accordingly.

Currently, all three of our towns are designated at [Red Alert Level](#) as a result of the increased numbers of positive cases in our communities. When communities experience more than 25 cases per 100,000 according to the [Connecticut Department of Public Health Town Level Covid Response Framework](#), additional remote, e-learning measures should be considered and implemented to reduce further community spread. Additional information and updates about recent cases within our schools can be found here: [Covid-19 Case Updates for Chester, Deep River, Essex, and Region 4 Schools](#).

The State of Connecticut has been updating its Covid-19 [public health data](#) every Thursday. Based on current guidance from the State of Connecticut, we will evaluate the next set of data on Thursday, December 3rd and confer with our local health authorities to determine the appropriate mode of school for the following week. Currently, the State of Connecticut has advised districts against preemptive district-wide closures in response to Covid-19 related concerns. Therefore, we will notify our families and staff of our decision on Friday, December 4th about the mode of school for the week of December 7-11.

As a reminder, staff and community members are encouraged to take advantage of free Covid-19 testing available in Old Saybrook 7 days a week. For additional details please see this flyer: [FREE Coronavirus Testing](#).

Grab and Go Meals will continue to be provided on scheduled school days outside all schools from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. for all children 18 and younger. Grab and Go Meals will continue to be provided on the scheduled school holiday dates of Wednesday, November 25th and Friday, November 27th outside John Winthrop Middle School for all children of the Chester, Deep River, and Essex communities.

We will communicate further updates as they become available. Thank you for continued patience and understanding during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Brian J. White
Superintendent of Schools