

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4

CHESTER • DEEP RIVER • ESSEX



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Dear Parents and Guardians of the Chester, Deep River, Essex and Region 4 Schools,

Following last week's one day closure of Essex Elementary on Tuesday, October 20th and the resulting quarantine of almost 50 people, the office of the Superintendent, Central Office Staff, and Board of Education members have received additional questions about the process of contact tracing employed by the health department, and how that process guides school-based decision making about the mode of school (Full In-Person / Hybrid / Full Remote Learning).

In response to questions about the process used by the Public Health Departments, as well as the collaboration between the Health Departments and schools when there is a positive case of Covid-19 in one of our buildings, we wanted to share this [FAQ document](#) compiled by our Essex Board of Education Chair Lon Seidman, which has been reviewed by Lisa Fasulo, the Director of the Health Department for the Town of Essex. This FAQ, along with other documents shared in this communication are intended to serve as a resources for families seeking to better understand the current procedures that guide our decision making about individual cases of Covid-19 in our schools, as well as when there is a need for a quarantine, closure of a single school, or the entire district.

The State of Connecticut recently released a new weekly, color-coded Covid-19 monitoring system which provides [the case rate per 100,000 people for every town](#). Last week, during the unveiling of new weekly data, the State shared that several towns across the state experienced changes in their infection rates, including Chester and Deep River which both moved from the yellow band to the orange band according to State of Connecticut metrics.

- While it is important to note that the rate of infection is a lead indicator that will continue to inform our decision making, the State rating system does not directly determine the mode of learning implemented by our schools.
- The Superintendent has the responsibility for determining if schools are functioning in person or remotely based on the circumstances of Covid-19 cases in schools and the community, the outcome of contract tracing reports, and available staffing levels.
- In the event of individual cases of Covid-19 in our schools, the Superintendent works closely with health authorities to determine if school can remain open and how many individuals must quarantine.
- We will continue to closely monitor the infection rate data trends in each of our three towns weekly with our local health authorities.

We are in a different place now than we were in the springtime when schools were initially closed by the State of Connecticut. The data collected and our experience this fall has provided evidence that our mitigation strategies have been successful. At this time, our schools are the only places that mandate and enforce mask usage and proper hygiene by all. As long as our buildings remain open, they will be safe.

While we remain confident that our school environments are safe as a result of these strategies being implemented with fidelity, we recognize that our ability to remain open for as long as possible this year will be determined by community

behavior. We have learned that most of the virus transmission is occurring in small, informal gatherings where people are not consistently adhering to the public health guidelines for social distancing and mask use.

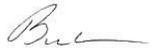
We are in this together. Please remember to:

- Wear your mask consistently and encourage family and friends to do the same.
- Wash your hands frequently
- Refrain from participating in social gatherings if possible.
- If you are contact traced, get tested and adhere to the proper quarantine protocols.

We are also re-sharing for your viewing, [Addendum 5](#) from the Connecticut State Department of Education document titled, Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together, as well as the [contact tracing flowchart](#) used by the Health Department, both of which have been included in previous communications from the Superintendent's Office regarding cases of Covid-19 in our schools. In addition we are sharing a recently revised [Addendum 4](#) from the Adapt, Advance, Achieve plan. It is our hope that the FAQ document coupled with these resources will provide more detailed information for families seeking to understand decision making about schools in response to test positive cases.

Our Director of Pupil Services, Ms. Sarah Smalley is our district Covid-19 Liaison. If you have any additional questions or concerns about the process of contact tracing in our schools, please contact her at (860) 526-2417 ext. 1449 or email at ssmalley@reg4.k12.ct.us

Sincerely,



Brian J. White
Superintendent of Schools