



9/24/21

Dear Parents and Members of the NSS Community,

As we approach the end of our first few weeks of class, I would like to thank you for your support of our schools and for your understanding as we implement systems and structures that incorporate updated guidelines from the Rhode Island Department of Health. To date, we have had multiple Covid-positive students at Narragansett High School, and a more limited number of positive cases at the elementary and middle schools. While we continue to do our very best to quickly contact trace, notify students and families, and notify the school community, any one case may involve extensive contact tracing, including interviews of students and staff, review of seating charts on buses and in classrooms, and other related research, and can impact many families.

There are a few simple precautions that we can all put in place which will be an incredible help to keeping our schools open and safe and students in their classes. These precautions include:

Stay Home When Sick

We have had several cases of symptomatic students coming to school and, consequently, many close contacts who have had to quarantine who would not have been exposed had the symptomatic student stayed home and received a Covid-19 test. *Please keep your child home and get a Covid-19 PCR test when he/she is exhibiting 1 or more of the following symptoms:*

- Fever or chills
- Cough (new)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Congestion or runny nose (new)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Additionally, RIDOH recommends that unvaccinated family members of the symptomatic student/staff member should stay home/be sent home from school pending the results of the laboratory-processed PCR test result.

Get Vaccinated

As you will see below, Covid-19 vaccination not only reduces risk of infection and severe illness, but also reduces or eliminates the need to miss class or athletics if exposed to a positive case. If your eligible child has not yet been vaccinated, you may schedule a vaccination appointment at www.vaccinateri.org.

Students should provide proof of vaccination status to the school nurse teacher assigned to their respective building. Failure to provide proof of vaccination will result in the individual being considered unvaccinated for the purposes of contact tracing or other public health requirements.

You may physically bring in your child's card to the school nurse and verify vaccination status or a photocopy or picture of a vaccination record can be sent to our nurses.

Wear a Mask

Per the Governor's order, masks are required in schools. The CDC also encourages wearing a mask in other settings where Covid-19 could be spread. Please see their information [linked here](#).

Participate in Covid-19 Screening

The best possible way to reduce infection and quarantines is to have as many people as possible participate in Covid-19 PCR screening tests. These are conducted in our nurses' offices and we receive the results usually within a day. All staff are required to have weekly Covid-19 screening tests. If more students participate, we will have fewer infections spread through our community either through asymptomatic spread or through inattention to symptoms. Beginning next week, we will distribute the aggregate outcomes of the screening tests to the NSS community.

If you have not yet signed up your child to be tested, please contact your school's main office or school nurse to give permission. Their email addresses are:

NHS: Mrs. Field, kfield@nssk12.org

NPS: Mrs. Fair, mfair@nssk12.org

NES: Mrs. Oberheu, soberheu@nssk12.org

Other Precautions

There are [other simple precautions which are linked here](#) that will have a positive impact on reducing the spread of Covid-19 in our community, including staying 6 feet apart, washing hands, and avoiding poorly ventilated spaces.

Positive Covid-19 Cases - School Procedures

If we do have a positive case, detailed below are some important updated processes we have put in place due to revised guidance from RIDOH. Please read these processes closely, as the details matter and there are differences in our procedures based on whether or not a student has been vaccinated.

If a Student Tests Positive for Covid-19

- Any student or staff member, vaccinated or unvaccinated, who tests positive for Covid-19 must isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms. If it is an asymptomatic case, isolation is 10 days from the date of the test.
- Close contacts during an infectious period are defined as those who were within six feet of an infected person (with or without a face mask) for a cumulative 15 minutes over a 24-hour period in either an indoor or outdoor setting regardless of vaccination status.
- Those individuals who fit the definition of a close contact may have been exposed to Covid-19 infection within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms of the positive person or within 48 hours of the Covid-19 test for asymptomatic positive cases.

Close Contacts

- **Unvaccinated students who are close contacts** must quarantine for 7 days. The student must provide proof of a negative PCR test to the school nurse conducted on or after day 5 of quarantine to return. The student will be sent home from school upon notification of being a close contact.
- **Vaccinated Students who are close contacts** **must** take a PCR test in the nurse's office immediately upon notification of being a close contact. The student will return to class after taking the PCR test, and **must test again on day 5 after contact** to remain in school. If the school does not have parental permission to conduct a PCR test, or if a student refuses to test, the student will be sent home until proof of a PCR test being conducted is submitted to the school nurse.
- **There is a new K-12 classroom exception to close contact quarantine for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students.** A K-12 student who is a close contact to another K-12 student infected with COVID-19 does not need to quarantine if **all** of the following apply:
 - Both the infected person and close contact are K-12 students;
 - The exposure occurred in an indoor K-12 classroom;
 - Both the exposed (close contact) student and the infected student wore face masks at all times during the close contact exposure;
 - At least three feet of physical distance was maintained at all times during the exposure.
 - Students who meet the Pre K-12 close contact exception must get tested with a PCR test in the nurse's office immediately after being identified as a close contact and then may return to class. As is the case with vaccinated students, these students must test again day 5 after contact.
 - If the school does not have parental permission to conduct a PCR test, or if a student refuses to test, the student will be sent home until proof of a PCR test being conducted is submitted to the school nurse.

Student Assignments and Academic Work While in Isolation or Quarantine

Teachers and administrators fully recognize the strain and disruption to learning caused by either isolation or quarantine due to Covid-19 infection or exposure. Teachers are following the below guidelines as they support students in either situation:

- Students should not be placed at any disadvantage in the grading or assessment process due to quarantine absence. Extended time on assignments or projects and/or modification to assignments or grading policies will be provided as necessary to account for a student not being in class.
- Alternate assignments that may be more appropriate to asynchronous learning (for example, I-Ready, Khan Academy, etc.) may be provided.
- If a student receives special education services, the student's case manager will ensure proper levels of support.
- Online learning platforms (Power School Learning, Seesaw, etc.) will be updated regularly so students know what their assignments are and can keep up with class. Assignments will be clearly outlined so that a student who was not in class to hear a verbal explanation can understand expectations.
- Students will be permitted to "zoom in" to selected classes as necessary as determined by their teacher, especially to critical lessons or parts of lessons. This will help quarantined students feel more connected, help clarify expectations for assignments, and help students to understand content.
- Teachers will reach out to quarantined students by email or video chat to ensure they are included in class and to answer questions that may arise.
- Teachers and students should be patient and exhibit understanding. Students did not choose to be quarantined and many may struggle with the sudden switch to being at home.

Finally, I would like to again thank you for your support of our students and teachers during this challenging time. I also ask that you extend understanding and exhibit patience with our school staff should your child be identified as a close contact. We want as many students as possible to stay in school safely, and we are following public health protocols from RIDOH as we investigate cases. The spike in infections locally and nationally as well as shifting public health guidance have caused our schools to have to modify plans quickly to help keep as many students in school as possible, and we are making adjustments based on RIDOH guidance and your feedback as well as our observations in the schools. I am particularly grateful to our school nurses as they have tirelessly worked with students, staff, and families to address the health needs of our community, and have done so with the best interests of children in mind. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
 Peter J. Cummings, Ed. D
 Superintendent