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I am writing with another End of Year Update on COVID-19 and our safe return to school on Monday, January 3, 2022. The first update was sent on Wednesday, 12/22/21. This is likely to be the last update prior to our return to school.

We know what to do regarding COVID-19 and must stay vigilant. Yes, the variant is concerning, but we still know how to manage it.

Remember to:

- mask up – especially indoors.
- maintain physical distancing whenever possible.
- report ALL student, faculty, & staff positive COVID-19 results (see #3).
- stay home if you are not feeling well and contact a physician and/or school nurse.
- get vaccinated - it is proving to be beneficial.

I continue to consult with State and County officials, BOCES administrators, area superintendents, nurses, administrators, and our district physician. The following seven points are being shared to provide specific content and reminders for a safe start to the new year.

- 1. Guiding Framework for Decisions on COVID-19** – As many have seen in the news, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued updated guidance regarding COVID-19 protocols. I have been following these developments closely and will seek to implement them as appropriate. The CDC's guidance is advisory in nature; public school districts must follow the standards established by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH). As you will see below, some of the new protocols suggested by the CDC have not been adopted yet by the NYSDOH or WCDOH.
- 2. Full In-Person Schooling on Monday, January 3** – The directive from the State and County, and the goal of nearly all area school districts, is to open with in-person schooling on Monday. Although this was a directive, we are positioned well to attend in person safely. The exception would be if we do not have sufficient staff to safely open one or more facilities. We are monitoring this situation closely, and right now, I am extremely confident that we will be able to open schools on Monday.

- 3. Reporting Requirements for COVID-19 During Holiday Recess & Throughout 2022** – Ardsley’s parents, faculty, and staff were informed of the requirement to report ANY confirmed positive cases (home test, rapid, PCR, etc.), even during the break. Please continue to use this [COVID-19 Positive Case](#) reporting link on the district home page. We need this information to help support the report of a positive COVID-19 case, inform our learning community of the number of [positive COVID-19 cases](#) in our district, and plan accordingly. Note - We have approximately 2,300 students and 415 faculty and staff in our district.

Please email copies of positive test results to the school health office: (**Carolyn White (AHS)** [cwhite@ardsleyschools.org](mailto:cwhite@ardsleyschools.org) **Pauline Reid (AMS)** [preid@ardsleyschools.org](mailto:preid@ardsleyschools.org) or **Susan Caporal (CRS)** [scaporal@ardsleyschools.org](mailto:scaporal@ardsleyschools.org)).

- 4. Quarantine Requirements** – It is important for Ardsley faculty, staff, and families to note what has and has not changed regarding quarantine requirements when confirmed to be COVID-19 positive.

**Quarantine for Students Diagnosed with COVID-19:** Quarantine requirements **have not changed** for students. Students who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 must continue to isolate for 10 days, regardless of vaccination status. As of now, the period of time that students must isolate has not been reduced by the NYSDOH to follow the CDC’s recommendations.

**Quarantine for Staff Members Diagnosed with COVID-19:** Quarantine requirements **have been revised for staff members only. Fully vaccinated, asymptomatic staff members** who have tested positive for COVID-19 **are permitted to return to work after five days of isolation.** These individuals, like everyone in a school, **are required to wear properly-fitted facemasks and self-monitor their health.**

Out of an abundance of caution, we would recommend that individuals who are symptomatic, even if testing negative, stay home until they have recovered from symptoms.

- 5. Mask Wearing Reminders** – Due to the enforcement of health and safety protocols, schools continue to be among the safest places for children. Ardsley continues to do a solid job at committing to masks as a mitigating strategy. Students and staff alike are wearing masks as required. During this uptick in cases, it is critical to remind everyone of proper mask-wearing practices, which include choosing a mask that fits snugly to one’s face and covers their nose and mouth at all times. Recent recommendations are advising against the use of cloth masks, and instead advocate the use of well-fitting, disposable, non-woven masks. We continue to require all students and staff to provide their

**own masks, and to come to school with one or more extra sets. We are able to** provide disposable surgical masks for individuals as needed.

- 6. Optional COVID-19 Surveillance Testing** – I offered gateway Surveillance Testing for all students, faculty, and staff upon return to school after the holidays and we have approximately 35% registered. We recommend participation in the optional COVID-19 surveillance testing program that we are offering in partnership with the WCDoH. An initial order was placed for surveillance testing kits for 1/5/22. If interested in participating please [access this link for the 3 simple steps to register.](#)
  
- 7. State-issued COVID-19 Tests** – It has been reported in the media that the state will be issuing COVID-19 test packets to each school district to be used to maximize in-person schooling. In our case, the tests are being distributed through Westchester BOCES. We have been advised by BOCES that tests may arrive over the weekend. Upon arrival, the tests then need to be redistributed to school districts across Westchester County. Plans are not final, since the schedule for test arrival is not final.

Nearly all districts in Westchester County, and certainly the Quad Village districts, will not be distributing the state-issued test to families. Instead, the tests will likely be used by medical professionals to strengthen our surveillance testing program and possibly operate a Test-To-Stay (TTS) program for unvaccinated students who are quarantined at school. If the tests are distributed to families, we would not be assured that they are being used solely for students, nor would we be able to know that the results are reliable. In addition, we do not anticipate another shipment of tests being shared by the state. The consensus is that the state-issued tests are a valuable resource for us to maintain in-person schooling for as many students as possible, and we must be cautious in their use and application.

I look forward to welcoming students and staff back to school on Monday, January 3rd. In the meantime, please review this information and share it with your children. Most importantly, please take time in these remaining days of the break to rest, rejuvenate, and safely celebrate the New Year.

Warm regards,  
Dr. Ryan Schoenfeld