

11/6/2020

Good Afternoon Parents,

As always, I hope this finds you well, safe, and healthy. Vermont has done a tremendous job in containing the spread of COVID-19 and we appreciate the vigilance of our community members in adhering to the state guidelines for physical distancing, mask wearing, hand hygiene, and travel restrictions. We will undoubtedly hear the importance of this vigilance as we enter a critical winter stretch of time.

At this point, the Department of Health and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development are advising against travel for the upcoming holidays. I realize how much we look forward to seeing family and friends at this time of the year but this is a season like no other. The ACCD has an updated travel map ([here](#)) and guidelines for cross state travel. The map is updated every Tuesday in order for families to plan weekend trips and is coded by colors to display the spread of COVID-19. We ask that you review this map and the guidelines before making any travel plans. *We are expecting additional guidance in the coming week and will distribute that upon receipt.*

As an educator and parent, I recognize the dilemma these travel restrictions create for families. However, we cannot encourage traveling to these areas. The health and safety of our building occupants is of primary importance to us and we do request that in the event you do travel to an area that requires quarantining upon return, that you accurately report this information. Students may miss up to four days of in-person instruction while they are in quarantine but this is necessary to maintain our walled-garden approach to keeping the virus out of our schools.

I shared last week that the Agency of Education has updated its Strong and Healthy Start guidance document that has been used to help schools and school districts in its planning operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is tremendous emphasis on containing the spread of the virus and there has been significant conversation around the questions we are asking in our screening practices, as a state. This is to ensure that we are inquiring about leisure/non-essential travel to counties that require quarantining upon return. This has already been happening at our schools and will now be standard practice in all our buildings and facilities. With the upcoming holiday travel season, it is important that students, families and staff answer this question honestly. Also updated in the guidance is information related to drop off requirements. Individuals who should be quarantining, whether that is related to infection, exposure to COVID-19, or traveling to a restricted county, should not be driving children to school.

We are currently engaged in our long term planning processes to start the second semester. A few weeks back I had indicated that we would be making some adjustments to the number of days that students are in the building. Because of the complexity of that work as well as

examining our practices for the second semester, we will be maintaining our current practices up to January 27th.

Much has been discussed about the increasing virus case counts in our region. While we do not have any immediate plans to switch to remote learning, this is a good opportunity to remind students, families, and staff that we must all remain remote-ready in the event we must make a quick transition in our learning environments.

The Agency of Education has updated its Winter Sports Program guidelines. These may be found [here](#)

Finally, the Department of Health has encouraged the continued distribution of their video on how contact tracing reduces the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It can be found [here](#).

Thank you for your continued support.

Andy Skarzynski  
Superintendent of Schools  
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union