



January 25, 2022

Dear Families and Friends,

In recent days in coordination with the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), the Agency of Education (AOE) has shifted its guidance relating to prevention and mitigation practices in schools. This change is in response to the widespread Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus. As a result, the school district is changing its practices to align with the guidance of state government so that we can remain open for in-person learning and maintain a healthy school environment.

To summarize the guidance of the AOE and VDH, these principles outline the mitigation practices that the Rutland schools will now follow:

1. Universal masking in our school buildings will be in effect through the month of February, at which point we will wait for further instruction from the AOE. As before, masks may be removed for instructional or operational purposes.
2. Schools will discontinue contact tracing as had been practiced previously.
3. Schools will transition from the Test to Stay program to be replaced by the Test at Home program.

What is the Test at Home Program? The details:

1. The AOE is distributing antigen test kits to schools so that we can then pass those on to students and families.
2. In the event that a school learns of a positive case of a student or staff member, the AOE asks schools "to do their best" to notify the school community of a case in a classroom or a school setting. Classmates are considered "presumptive contacts."
3. Presumptive contacts may pick up test kits from the school. Participation is voluntary.
4. AOE guidance states that the school should not monitor compliance of test kit pick up or use. The AOE's guidance document states clearly, "It is not the school's responsibility to enforce quarantine guidance."
5. Participation by families in Test at Home is voluntary. Families are not responsible to report their antigen test results of their child in order to attend school. There is no requirement that students test in order to attend school.
6. However, AOE guidance does state that any student or staff member who has COVID-19 symptoms should stay home from school until symptoms improve and they remain fever-free for 24 hours. Also, VDH strongly encourages people with symptoms to test for COVID-19.

If you choose to participate in Test at Home, VDH recommends that you test in the following manner:

1. If individuals are fully vaccinated (and have received a booster as adults), they can pick up two tests and use them on the fourth and fifth day after learning of their presumptive exposure.
2. If individuals are not fully vaccinated, they can pick up five tests and use them for the next five consecutive days after exposure.

Other details:

1. School-aged students who received their 2-dose vaccine series are considered fully vaccinated and do not need to isolate if they are identified as a close contact, providing they have no symptoms.
2. Someone who has had a confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 90 days does not need to isolate as long as they do not have any symptoms.
3. Our school nurses may provide assistance in administering a test in school for families who need that help, and then send a second test home for the family to complete approximately 24 hours after the first test. Schools will require consent from families to do in-school testing.

Finally, in the event that any of our schools run low on testing supplies, leaving us without enough test kits to distribute to students who are presumptive contacts, students should continue to come to school. Any student who has COVID-19 symptoms should stay home from school. However, schools are requested not to prevent students from attending school based on whether or not they have tested. Again, the AOE states that it is not the school's responsibility to enforce compliance with Health Department guidance.

Please note, Stafford Technical Center does not have tests to distribute. Reach out to your partner high school regarding tests and testing processes.

For more information, visit the Health Department's [What to Do if You are a Close Contact](#) and [What to Do if You Test Positive for COVID-19](#) websites.

Sincerely,



Bill Olsen, Superintendent