



Franklin Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent
355 East Central Street; Suite 3
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038
Phone: 508-553-4819

January 4, 2021

Dear Franklin Families and Faculty/Staff,

Happy New Year!

We know that this is a concerning time as COVID-positive cases climb both in Franklin and in Massachusetts. We appreciate the cooperation of families and faculty/staff for reporting positive cases to us and for adhering to and communicating quarantine requirements for those who are deemed close contacts.

Later today, we will send the district's standard letter regarding positive COVID-19 cases in our school community. Please note that we have not issued a letter since December 22, 2020 and are catching up with the general communication. Over winter break, we conducted contact tracing, in collaboration with the local department of public health nurses, and any close contacts have been identified and communicated with directly. We spent today, a remote learning day, completing follow up and assessing staff and student attendance for the coming days.

We will return to our hybrid schedule tomorrow, Tuesday, January 5, 2021.

Please know that staff attendance is something that we are continuing to monitor due to positive COVID cases, quarantine requirements for themselves or family members, and routine absences that occur in any given year. We continue to struggle, at times, to provide enough substitute coverage. As in the weeks prior to Winter Break, there may continue to be times where a school needs to move to remote learning as a result of not enough supervision. We will do our best to communicate this to you the night before the following school day, if possible.

Reminder of Updated Health Metrics from DPH and DESE Guidance on Instructional Models

The Department of Public Health updated the COVID health metrics for communities in November. The new designations took the size of each community into account. Additionally, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education updated their guidance on how to interpret these health metrics and apply instructional models accordingly. This information was shared in a letter to families and faculty/staff in November. The transition plan among instructional models communicated at the beginning of the school year was based on the older guidance that is no longer current. We are following the November guidance.

DESE: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/interpreting-dph-metrics.html>

At this time, Franklin has been designated as a "red" community for three weeks. Given the DESE guidance, however, a red designation for multiple weeks no longer suggests a shift toward fully remote learning. According to DESE, "**Fully remote instructional models should be implemented only as a last resort** in classrooms, schools, or districts when there is suspected in-school transmission or a significant municipal outbreak, in accordance with DESE's *Guidance on*

Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios. Classrooms and schools should reopen after appropriate mitigation strategies have been implemented, as determined in consultation with the local board of health, DPH, and DESE.”

We are continuing to monitor health metrics very closely. Based on the information we have from our contact tracing efforts, we have not had evidence of in-school transmission. We will continue to be vigilant in our review of cases as well as the implementation of health and safety practices including mask-wearing, physical distancing, and hand hygiene.

We ask for your continued cooperation in support of these practices as well as continued communication.

Communication of Travel: A Reminder

This is a reminder of the District’s travel expectations and Governor Baker’s Executive Order requiring those who travel out of state to quarantine or receive a negative COVID-19 test no more than 72 hours prior to their return to Massachusetts. It is recommended that you test 4-5 days after your return, due to the incubation period of the virus. As noted in the COVID-Handbooks for Families/Students, FPS requires travelers of all ages (including those 10 and under) to test or quarantine when returning to Massachusetts from a non-lower risk state in order to return to school in-person. If you are not testing, the quarantine time frame is now 10 days.

If your family had traveled over break, please return documentation of negative COVID testing for your child or children to the school nurses’ offices upon returning to school. The PCR tests are the “gold standard” for accuracy. Rapid tests should be followed up by PCR testing, according to the Massachusetts travel order.

It is so important to remain vigilant with our health and safety practices. We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sara Ahern
Superintendent of Schools