



SOUTH SENECA

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Happy New Year!

As we plan to re-open our school buildings on January 3 after the break, we understand that the surge of new COVID-19 cases in the county, combined with the increased number of indoor gatherings around the holidays, will result in more members of our school community testing positive each day. If we are to remain open for school activities during this month, we must all work together. There are three particular new strategies to make you aware of as we head into 2022.

1. New York State is providing a large supply of at-home test kits to be distributed through our BOCES network, for families to have the option to administer in the first few days of returning to school. The kits are being delivered to South Seneca by Monday, January 3, and will be available to families as soon as they arrive to us. Testing at home can provide important information for catching new cases quickly, so that those who test positive can isolate right away.

*****For those that have already tested positive with home kits, please make sure you contact the Seneca County Health Department*** (you can use covid19@co.seneca.ny.us) to report those results, and begin isolation right away.

2. Seneca County has adopted a “Test To Stay” program which could potentially allow asymptomatic quarantined individuals to attend school during their quarantine period. Those in quarantine can complete a rapid test at school in the morning each school day of the quarantine period, and a negative result would mean they were cleared to access their school day. ***This would not allow them to participate in extracurricular activities.*** A separate letter will fully describe the Test To Stay details.
3. Besides the time when students are unmasked and eating in the cafeteria, we know that bus rides can be the point where we are most vulnerable to larger quarantine numbers (people identified as close contacts). It is important that we are even more vigilant this winter to assigned seating on bus rides, as we minimize the chances of a single positive case on a bus resulting in quarantines.

Please continue to monitor district communications as we post public notices almost daily. Notices of new cases will continue to be reported as they are received from the county health department.

Our goal will be to keep school programs up and running throughout the winter. Each member of the community has a role to play to allow that to happen, including careful attention to safety protocols in the buildings and ***a promise to stay home when any symptoms (or even one single symptom) present.*** The district can always help to provide or conduct COVID testing along the way.

We continue to believe that even during county-wide surges, the school buildings are among the safest places to be. If any short-term closure would be necessary, it would be a result of potential staffing shortages due to quarantines, or a public health advisory directed by the county itself. We know from past experience how disruptive it is for families and support networks when buildings or programs are closed and inaccessible. We will work hard together to avoid these if at all possible.