



Lebanon Public Schools

891 EXETER ROAD, LEBANON, CONNECTICUT 06249-
Tel. (860) 642-7795 Fax. (860) 642-4589

ANDREW J. GONZALEZ, Superintendent of Schools
andrew.gonzalez@lebanonct.org

Dear Lebanon Families,

Thank you for your patience while awaiting our decision on moving towards a 5-day quarantine as recommended by the CDC and supported by the Department of Public Health and the State Department of Education.

I chose to take a conservative approach and act out of an abundance of caution in continuing to use the 10-day quarantine period upon our return from winter break. The number of cases we have dealt with over the past few weeks have been the highest at any point in the year. We are appreciative of how responsive and supportive families have been in monitoring their child's health, keeping them home if they are symptomatic and reporting positive home test results.

I still have an uneasy feeling about shortening the quarantine period, but I know I need to balance taking care of our staff and student physical health with the benefits of in-person learning and taking care of their social and emotional well-being.

That being said, effective **Monday, January 24th** we will begin implementing the new guidelines listed below (a chart is provided at the end of this narrative to help understand the different situations). Staff and students who are currently in quarantine will stay on the timeline communicated to them originally but we will begin calculating return to school dates using the new guidance for new cases next week.

Quarantine, Isolation, Testing, and Return to Activities

On December 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released updated guidance regarding the appropriate duration of quarantine and isolation for COVID-19.

Based on this updated guidance and the science supporting it, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) advises at this time that it is appropriate to allow school districts the choice to make changes in their operating rules regarding quarantine, isolation, testing, and return to in-school activities. These suggested changes are designed to focus on the increased risk from individuals reporting for school related activities with active symptoms of illness and the decreased risk for and from individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

In brief:

- **Individuals who are even mildly symptomatic with any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19 should immediately isolate at home, test for the virus that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) with a PCR, antigen, or self-test, and remain away from activities outside of the home until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours and other symptoms are significantly improved.**
- **Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home for at least 5 days, or longer if symptoms develop and persist. A mask should continue to be worn for an additional 5 days at all times when around others.**
- **Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals who are notified that they have had a close contact with an individual who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19 should immediately quarantine at home and test for the virus 5 days after their last exposure to the COVID-19 case. This is especially important in situations where extended high-intensity exposure may have occurred, such as with household contacts, in unmasked social settings (e.g., sleepovers, parties), and/or during athletic activities. The table below outlines different scenarios that may occur in school settings, considerations for each individual situation, and appropriate actions for individuals and schools to take in response.**

Contact Tracing

Because individual-level contact tracing is a tool that becomes less effective when community transmission levels are high, DPH recommends that schools begin to refocus the activities of health staff away from the investigation of relatively low risk in-school exposures and toward the identification, early isolation, and clinical management of students and staff with active symptoms that could be related to COVID-19.

At this time given:

- 1) the current very high level of community transmission throughout our state;
- 2) the experience of Connecticut and the Lebanon Public School district that have conducted in-person learning throughout the past two years of the pandemic, even in the setting of very high community transmission;
- 3) the infrequent conversion of close contacts; and
- 4) the need to prioritize available resources in PreK-12 schools, the position of the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is that routine contact tracing of individual exposures that occur inside schools or during school-organized and supervised activities can be discontinued (subject to the conditions and provisions indicated below) without posing a significant increased risk of negative impact on in-school transmission of COVID-19 or access to in-person learning.

Several factors that influence this position include:

- Universal implementation of, and strict compliance with, robust mitigation strategies in all our schools.

- Infrequently identified person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 inside school buildings, especially in relation to other activities and environments children are engaging with outside of school.
- Very high numbers of student quarantine days based on individual contact tracing in schools compared to the very low number of school close contacts that become infected.
- Current delays in the receipt of test results due to high testing demand combined with new shortened isolation and quarantine times for individuals make it likely that many students would be outside of their quarantine period by the time contact tracing could be completed. Since we have opted to discontinue individual-level contact tracing in our schools we will continue to ensure that we:
 - Enforce universal masking rules inside schools
 - Take steps to ensure that periods of unmasking inside the school (e.g., meal periods) are as brief and as distanced as possible.
 - Appropriately notify staff and parents/guardians of students regarding positive cases occurring in the school population.

Sports

While the emphasis of this communication is on students being available for in-person instruction, I understand what an important role athletics play in shaping the whole-child and contributing to a positive school experience. To that end I have included CIAC's revised winter sports guidance- http://www.casciac.org/pdfs/CIACWinter2021-2022COVIDSportGuidanceFinalDraftv4_Approved.pdf

Please know that our building Principals and School Nurses will continue to follow the latest guidance provided. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to get clarification on how these changes may impact your learner and your family.

I know there is a lot of information in this letter and that the guidance continues to evolve, so once again, thank you for partnering with us to share the responsibility of keeping our schools safe. We take pride each day in working with the learners of Lebanon and partnering with our families.

Best,



Andy

	Student/Staff with any COVID-19 symptoms		Student/Staff with no COVID-19 symptoms
If fully vaccinated against COVID-19 <i>(defined as two weeks after second dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or first dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine)</i>	<p>Isolate at home.</p> <p>Test for COVID-19 (either self-test or at a testing site).</p> <p>If test result is negative, return to activities when fever-free for at least 24 hrs. and other symptoms are significantly improved.</p> <p>If test result is positive, isolate for at least 5 days, return to activities on day 6 or later when fever-free for at least 24 hrs. and other symptoms are significantly improved.</p> <p>Wear a mask at all times when around others for an additional 5 days (i.e., through day 10).</p>		<p><i>If notified of a dose contact with a COVID-19 case outside of the school day:</i></p> <p>Continue with in-person learning.</p> <p>Test for COVID-19 (either self-test or at a testing site) 5 days after the exposure.</p> <p>Consider quarantining for 5-days from other activities outside of school, especially if notified of an extended high-intensity exposure (e.g., household contact, unmasked social contact, contact during athletic activities).</p> <p>Wear a mask at all times during any activities when around others for 10 days.</p>
If only partially vaccinated <i>(one dose of a two dose COVID-19 vaccine or within two weeks of final dose)</i> or Unvaccinated or Vaccination status is unknown	<p><i>If notified of a dose contact with a COVID-19 case outside of the school day:</i></p> <p>Isolate at home for a minimum of 5 days since last exposure to the COVID-19 case.</p> <p>Test for COVID-19 (either self-test or at a testing site).</p> <p>Return to activities on day 6 or later when fever-free for at least 24 hrs. and other symptoms are significantly improved.</p> <p>Wear a mask at all times during any activities when around others for an additional 5 days (i.e., through day 10).</p>	<p><i>If no known close contact with a COVID-19 case outside of the school day:</i></p> <p>Isolate at home.</p> <p>Test for COVID-19 (either self-test or at a testing site).</p> <p>If test result is negative, return to activities when fever-free for at least 24 hrs. and other symptoms are significantly improved.</p> <p>If test result is positive, isolate for at least 5 days after symptoms began, return to activities on day 6 or later when fever-free for at least 24 hrs. and other symptoms are significantly improved, and wear a mask at all times during any activities when around others for an additional 5 days (i.e., through day 10).</p>	<p><i>If notified of a dose contact with a COVID-19 case outside of the school day:</i></p> <p>Quarantine at home from school, extracurricular activities, and other activities for 5 days from the last exposure to the COVID-19 case.</p> <p>Test for COVID-19 (either self-test or at a testing site) 5 days after the exposure.</p> <p>Wear a mask at all times during any activities when around others for an additional 5 days (i.e., through day 10).</p>

The Lebanon Board of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons and equal access to Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. The Lebanon Board of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal nondiscrimination laws.