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January 20, 2022

Dear Maple Run Community,

As I shared last week, the State of Vermont has made widespread changes to COVID-19 protocols and how schools should identify and notify individuals with school-based exposures. This new direction has been formalized in a series of memorandums from the Agency of Education (AOE) to schools last week and this week based upon the Omicron variant of COVID-19. To view a presentation on the science influencing these changes by Vermont doctors, [you can watch the recording here](#) (Passcode: R?y01.t+). Members of our leadership team and school nursing team have reviewed these documents, our resources, and developed our implementation plan, which I outline below.

#### **Contact Tracing:**

Schools have received clear guidance to cease contact tracing and instead provide general notification of school-based exposure to COVID-19. Beginning immediately, MRUSD schools will post daily updates to positive case numbers and close contacts via each buildings' announcements.

#### **Testing:**

In the event of exposure to COVID-19, students and staff (regardless of vaccination status) will have access to at-home rapid test kits, supplied by MRUSD. This new testing protocol will begin on Tuesday, January 25th. In the meantime, we will continue our Test-to-Stay program as previously communicated. Regardless of school-based exposure, if your child is symptomatic, you are recommended to seek testing through the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) or your physician's office.

If a student or staff member tests positive, they should notify their school nurse as soon as possible. For guidance on administering the QuickVue At-Home tests, please refer to [this video](#). Individuals who test positive are responsible for notifying anyone who may have been exposed outside of the school day, as the Department of Health no longer conducts contact tracing. [Read more about what to do if you test positive.](#)

#### **Masking:**

The AOE is requiring masks in schools. Please remember to send your children to school with as high-quality a mask as possible. At this time, KN95 masks are recommended. If you are experiencing difficulty purchasing high-quality masks for your child, please reach out to your school's main office. [Read more about masks and how to protect yourself and others.](#)


### Why these changes?

Due to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, our current method of contact tracing and testing is ineffective from a public health perspective. As a result, the AOE and VDH recommend schools adjust prevention and mitigation strategies to keep students safe and schools open.

It's important to know that this shift in policy has the support of Vermont's infectious disease experts, [pediatricians](#), public health experts, and school nurses. It is based on the current knowledge of the new Omicron variant of COVID-19.

In a school year full of shifts and changes I remain thankful for the partnership and patience of our community. Thank you for supporting our efforts to keep MRUSD's students and staff safe and in school. The best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is to [stay home when you are sick](#), even if you have a negative test result.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bill Kimball', written over a horizontal line.

Bill Kimball

Superintendent of Schools