



January 7, 2022

Dear Lamoille North Families and Staff:

Happy New Year! I hope that you and your family were able to relax and enjoy the break and spend time doing things that you love with the people you love. This week's community letter is going to be devoted to our current climate and questions that we have received from many families, community members and staff, given the currently evolving situation regarding our COVID-19 response at the state and local levels. I recognize that many are fatigued with ongoing commentary about COVID-19, but the majority of requests we are receiving from our school communities indicate that communication about COVID-19 in our Lamoille North towns should continue in "real" time. That being said, I want to share with you what we know today.

Between the start of the school year and December 17th, we had 129 cases of COVID-19 that impacted our schools. As of today, we've had 95 cases since December 17th. To our knowledge, none of our cases have resulted in hospitalizations. 33 of these cases tested positive over December break, so there was no school exposure for those cases. Earlier this week, 590 students and staff members participated in surveillance testing. Of those 590 participants, 12 tested positive. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that 85% of cases in Vermont are considered to be Omicron.

A number of people have asked why our schools are not closed during what is considered a time of increased transmission. The Vermont Agency of Education (VTAOE) has been very clear about the very few conditions under which schools can close, given that we are not in a State of Emergency. Statute requires us to be in school for a certain number of days each year. And, to date, the VTAOE has been very clear that school-wide remote learning is **not** an option this year.

During this current phase of the pandemic, the VTAOE has indicated that there are conditions under which we could close a school. For example, if we do not have enough staff members to safely operate our schools or if less than 50% of students are able to attend school (at least 51% of students must physically be present in school for the school day to count toward the annual requirement), we will make a decision to close a school. In those cases, the days would **not** count toward student attendance and would need to be made up, just like a snow day or a water main break day. There may be circumstances that are extenuating enough to consider "learning at home" as an option for a small group of students, a class, or a grade for a short period of time. Our goal, is and continues to be, to keep schools open and to educate all of our students with in-person learning.

Please know that the continued safety of our students and staff is our top priority; we take none of this lightly, and we are analyzing each situation in an ever-changing environment. Please also be aware that the COVID-19 guidance at the national and state levels is changing quickly. With very short notice, we may need to change our practices accordingly which can make communication somewhat confusing. We will continue to do our very best to keep up with and communicate the changes. We are told to anticipate that Governor Scott will announce a major shift in COVID-19 policy and practice at the next press conference, scheduled for Tuesday,

January 11th. We do not know what those changes are at this point, but will communicate with you as soon as we know about them.

Our district COVID-19 coordinator, Flo Kelley, and our COVID-19 compliance assistant, Christopher Bowles, have health information to share as follows:

Concerning recent COVID-19 changes affecting our students and families, the State has recently updated many of the guidelines related to vaccinations, isolation and quarantine, as well as testing programs. Some important takeaways from the new guidance are as follows:

- *“Fully vaccinated” is the completion of the primary series of any vaccination.*
- *“Up to date” is a person who is fully vaccinated and has received a booster.*
- *In order to be fully vaccinated or up to date, 14 days must pass after receiving the injection.*
 - *This is the same for adults and children.*
- *When calculating isolation or quarantine duration, the initial 5 days are counted from Day 0, which is any of the following:*
 - *Onset of symptoms*
 - *A positive test result*
 - *The date of close contact with an infected person*

So, for example, if you or your student receives a positive test result, Day 0 is the date of that result, and the isolation period lasts for 5 days from Day 0 (i.e. if Day 0 = January 1; the isolation period is January 2-6; and the student would be able to return on January 7).

In addition, mask compliance at all times in and out of school is an important component to all of the new State guidelines. If you or your students are involved in isolation or quarantine, and then return to school after isolation or quarantine, it is important to maintain proper masking.

Finally, though Test to Stay (TTS) has been available at the main Lamoille Union campus since before the holiday break, a recent surge in positive cases has compelled us to temporarily suspend TTS on campus. The good news is TTS has been rolling out in the elementary schools, and by the end of January, should be available in all schools districtwide. We look forward to resuming TTS on campus when the current surge in cases subsides.

As always, please reach out to our health professionals with any questions you may have. Flo Kelley can be reached at fkelly@luhs18.org.

In other news, as promised, we are sharing information from our community partners as follows:

From Healthy Lamoille Valley:

“We are often asked, “How are youth impacted by marijuana?” Next week, we seek to answer that question for the community. On Thursday, January 13, 2022, at 7:00 pm, Healthy Lamoille Valley is hosting an online event: “Teens and Cannabis: A Look into the Data on the Impacts of Legal Retail Markets on Youth”. With retail cannabis coming to our region, it’s important that we help youth, parents, and the broader community to understand the impacts of marijuana on our student populations. When we understand the impacts, we can take steps to intervene and reduce the risks for our children and youth. Please join us in sharing this event with your school board, advisory councils, staff, and families. We hope you can make it!”

<https://www.healthylamoillevalley.org/teens-and-cannabis/>

From Lamoille Family Center:

Join Lamoille Family Center for an important workshop:

Talking with Kids about Racism

January 12 and January 19, 2022, at 5:30PM via Zoom

Rachel Siegel and Hal Colston of the Peace and Justice Center will lead us through a two-part workshop series exploring ways to effectively discuss racism with children through adolescents.”

Register: <https://www.lamoillefamilycenter.org>

We thank our community partners for sharing their events with us and for the work they do every day.

Finally, I continue to thank all of you for your continued dedication and commitment to ensuring a safe and healthy environment for our students and staff.

My best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools
Lamoille North Supervisory Union