

Newton Public Schools

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January 2, 2022

Newton Public Schools Community:

We hope you and your family have had a happy, healthy winter break despite the record number of reported COVID-19 cases and test positivity rates in Sussex County and across New Jersey. With the risk index moving to very high risk/red last Thursday, the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) issued updates to its recommendations for schools. Given the widespread availability of vaccinations for adults and school-aged children and the value of in-person instruction, the State is not advocating the preventive closure of schools as a mitigation strategy.

The Newton Public Schools will open for fully in-person instruction as planned on Monday January 3, 2022, while continuing to monitor the health situations in our schools. We will also continue to adhere to mask mandates and promote layered prevention strategies such as physical distancing, handwashing, cleaning, improved ventilation, staying home when sick, etc.

NJDOH promotes routine COVID-19 screening, especially among the unvaccinated. Due to an increase in individuals seeking COVID-19 testing in emergency departments, the Department is reminding the public that **emergency departments are for emergencies only**. NJDOH is encouraging the public to visit COVID19.nj.gov to find one of the over 1,000 testing locations throughout the state, including free pop-up and county sites, rather than go to an emergency department. The state also has partnered with Vault Medical Services to offer free at-home testing, and you can visit learn.vaultthealth.com/nj to order a free test.

Regarding isolation and quarantine, the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a press release on December 27, 2021, shortening the recommended time for isolation and quarantine for the general public. CDC is currently updating guidance documents for specific settings, including schools, to consider how updated isolation and quarantine time frames should be applied in these settings. NJDOH will review and/or update state guidance for schools once the CDC guidance is released. Our local practice has been to review those written recommendations once NJDOH issues them. Until then, we will continue to follow the [current written NJDOH guidance](#) as issued on December 15, 2021.

Please be safe and feel free to reach out to the schools or my office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Dr. G. Kennedy Greene