



Mountainside School District

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Janet Walling - Superintendent of Schools

Mountainside Parents/Guardians,

December 22, 2021

I hope this letter finds you well as you and your families prepare for the upcoming holidays and winter break. In addition to wishing everyone a safe and healthy vacation and New Year, I am writing some important health updates and changes from the NJDOH regarding quarantine timelines.

Like other surrounding areas, Mountainside has seen an increase in positive COVID cases over the past 2 weeks. Our ability to maintain distancing beyond the recommended 3 feet when masked, and keeping 6 feet at lunch, continues to drastically minimize close contact situations within school and the need for other students to quarantine. I firmly believe that these mitigation strategies, and others, are what allow us to remain open for successful in-person learning. These additional cases, however, do create increased responsibility to our school nurses and others who oversee the contact tracing process as we must investigate every situation brought to our attention. Our staff works diligently within the guidelines that are provided when making any determinations for student quarantine. While I fully understand that needing to keep a child home, or having them tested to show a negative result, may not be convenient, please know that these requests are made with the goal of keeping everyone in our District safe and healthy. I ask that you treat our staff with respect and consideration if they contact you regarding these situations. We do not take the need to quarantine any student lightly and it is ALWAYS our goal to remain open to in person education for the entire district to the greatest extent feasible.

The NJDOH updated their [Public Health Recommendations for K-12 Schools](#) on December 15th. The following information includes some specific details and changes to note:

- Unvaccinated close contacts of COVID positive staff/students may now use a **reduced** quarantine period and return to school after 10 days (return on day 11) without a test OR return after 7 days (return on day 8) with a negative PCR test administered between days 5-7 after exposure, as long as they are asymptomatic
- Individuals with COVID compatible symptoms and **no known exposure to a positive COVID case in the last 14 days** may return to school after their symptoms fully resolve, and without a negative COVID test, ONLY if they have an alternate diagnosis that is supported by clinical evaluation.
- Individuals who test positive, or individuals with COVID symptoms who have not been tested, who DO NOT have a documented alternate diagnosis from a healthcare provider are excluded for at least 10 days.
- In addition to COVID, the District has seen an increase in typical illnesses such as the flu, respiratory viruses, and others. PLEASE keep your child home if he/she is not feeling well.
- Our [COVID Dashboard](#) is updated regularly to keep everyone informed of current cases.
- Continue to remain cognizant of the signs of COVID, and keep unvaccinated children home if anyone in your household exhibits symptoms or is awaiting the results of a COVID test.

Mountainside School District **does not** have any plans to move to a remote instructional setting after winter break at this time. It is our intent to remain open for in person instruction as it is the best educational and emotional environment for our students. I will, however, remain in contact with our local health department, and others, over the break in order to monitor local cases and any concerns that may arise during this time.

Thank you for your continued support, and please enjoy this time off with those who mean the most to you!

Janet Walling