January 11, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Last week, the COVID-19 Task Force held a community forum to review the protocols the District has in place to handle the current pandemic conditions. During the forum, the Task Force addressed a number of questions posed by the school community regarding these protocols. This letter will answer additional questions received that were not addressed at that time.

1. How will we be notified about close or proximate contact? Via e-mail? Phone call?

   ANSWER: Only close contacts of a positive case will be contacted. This will be done through a phone call.

2. Isn’t it [the definition of a close contact] ten minutes without a mask?

   ANSWER: No. Protocols from the Suffolk County Department of Health state that if you spend more than ten minutes within six feet of a positive case, you are a Close Contact. This is regardless of wearing a mask or wearing no mask or having additional barriers, such as polycarbonate desk barricades.

3. Where will testing take place?

   ANSWER: If we are identified as a Yellow Zone and must test, we will be using the auxiliary gym at the high school as our testing site.

4. Would you consider giving the option of either full remote or full time in person? A survey monkey?

   ANSWER: On January 5, a survey was sent asking students in grade 6-12 if they wanted to be full remote or come back to a hybrid model. Twenty students responded that they wished to return to the hybrid model. At this time, we cannot accommodate the number of students who wish to attend full time in person.

5. Who is monitoring/answering the Covid hotline, and is it being monitored overnight? How long is the turnaround time from notification to the administration of a specific building?
6. What percentage do you need to maintain a plateau at and for how long to increase the number of kids in school?

ANSWER: Right now we are in a surge. We are getting new cases for both students and staff each day. This has a cumulative effect. During the next few weeks, vaccines will be available for educators. As a result, I am anticipating a drop in cases from staff. Dropping below 1.5% for the student population and remaining there for three consecutive weeks may be a reasonable indicator that an increase in density is possible. The Department of Health would also be consulted.

7. The CDC has now declared that people who have been positive do NOT have to quarantine if they are exposed after release from isolation, for up to 90 days after their positive test. Suffolk DOH is following this guidance as well. Will this be honored for Islip students?

ANSWER: The following information comes directly from Jennifer Culp, MPA, Suffolk County Department of Health Services:

If someone who previously had a positive molecular test for COVID-19 now becomes a contact of a case:

- If the contact’s positive test (or first positive test, if they were tested more than once) was more than one month ago, they should be quarantined as a contact.
- If the contact’s positive test was less than one month ago, they do not need to be quarantined. The contact should self-monitor for symptoms twice daily for 14 days (from date of last exposure to positive case) and immediately self-isolate if symptoms develop.

8. Would you strongly consider changing your virtual program if we went full remote?

ANSWER: If we were to go full remote at the elementary level, we would re-examine our current program. We are aware that children experience Zoom fatigue. We would see what is developmentally reasonable and instructionally sound, with different expectations at the primary level (grades K-2) and the intermediate level (grades 3-5).

9. How does the District’s doctor contribute to the decision making in Islip? Do you have a licensed health care provider or a registered nurse on your COVID task force? If so, how much does this person’s opinion weigh on your decision making? If not, why not?

ANSWER: The COVID Task Force was formed to work as a committee to help interpret rules and make administrative decisions about the district. Our nurses are consulted daily. We also consult...
with Dr. Donatelli, our school physician. Of course, we also consult with the Suffolk County Board of Health. For example, if we had a student test positive and were not sure about someone who might need to quarantine, we would present the case to the Board of Health to give us a definitive ruling. They have the final ruling in a case. The Task Force generally meets after hours, several times a week.

10. It was mentioned at the Community Forum that a neighboring district was bringing back their high school students full time on February 1. How are they doing that?

ANSWER: Our neighboring high school was originally designed to accommodate well over 2,000 students. They have a bigger building. They will be converting their secondary gym into a secondary cafeteria so they may maintain social distancing at all lunchtimes. They also have a greater percentage of students than we do who are fully remote.

If you have any additional questions, please email these to DistrictClerk@islipufsd.org.

Sincerely yours,

Ellen Semel
Superintendent of Schools

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