



East Providence School Department

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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear East Providence Faculty and Staff,

As we return to in-person teaching and learning from the holiday break, the Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association (RISSA) recognizes that it is imperative that Rhode Island's COVID-19 protocols for schools be updated immediately. Specifically, those regarding testing, isolation and quarantine periods must be refined in order to align and be consistent with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) has subsequently promulgated and adopted these new CDC protocols for the general public, which are now divergent and more restrictive for those applied to public schools. As a result, this situation has caused a great deal of confusion and inconsistency across the state since school communications with families and the community regarding COVID-19 protocols are now in direct contravention of accepted CDC guidance, causing wider gaps in educational services with little benefit towards reduced transmission.

Therefore, based on the changes released by CDC on December 31, 2021, K-12 public schools in Rhode Island are changing our protocols for quarantine, as well as increasing our capacity for in-school screening, referred to as **Monitor to Stay**, and in-school testing for our athletes, referred to as **Test to Play**. In addition to the continued focus on full vaccination and booster of adults and children ages 5 and older and mask wearing in public, these two strategies continue to be the most effective means of minimizing the transmission and impact of COVID-19.

Updated Isolation Guidelines for Individuals who Test Positive

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status must stay home and isolate for 5 days.

After 5 days, from the start of symptoms or date of test, they may leave their house if they have no symptoms or symptoms are improving, however, they must wear a mask for an additional 5 days. If they have a fever, they should continue to stay home until their fever resolves.

Updated Guidelines for Close Contacts

Students or staff who are close contacts to a known COVID-19 case may return to school under the following conditions:

1. *Individuals who received:*

- a COVID-19 booster vaccine or
- the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months or
- the primary series of Johnson & Johnson vaccine within the last 2 months

2. Individuals who have temporary immunity and have tested positive within the last 90 days:

Individuals who meet either #1 or #2 of the above criteria do not need to quarantine but should wear a mask around others for 10 days. If symptoms develop, individuals must stay home and get a test.

3. Individuals who received:

- the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted or
- completed the primary series of Johnson & Johnson vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted

Individuals who meet #3 of the above criteria must quarantine for at least 5 days.

It is recommended that such individuals be tested on day 5, but must continue to wear a mask for 5 additional days. If symptoms develop, stay home and get a test.

Please note that to be considered fully vaccinated for quarantine purposes, an individual has received a booster shot and completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months or received the J&J vaccine within the last 2 months.

Monitor to Stay

Monitor to Stay is only for school-based settings, and allows students and staff identified as close contacts to a known COVID-19 case, who are not yet fully vaccinated to be able to remain in school as long as they consistently and correctly wear a mask and don't develop symptoms.

They are eligible to participate in Monitor to Stay if the close contact with a COVID-19 case occurred under **all** of the following conditions:

- The contact occurred during the school day (not during extracurricular, athletic, or social events);
- Both the contact and the COVID-19 case were consistently masked during the exposure even if brief unmasked periods (e.g., snack time, cafeteria) occurred, and as long as three feet or more of space was consistently maintained;
- If outdoors at school, both individuals were masked or supervised if unmasked (e.g., mask breaks, physical education, recess);
- The close contact remains asymptomatic (if they develop any symptoms they must revert to regular isolation/quarantine requirements).

Monitor to Stay is a system utilized in Connecticut since the start of school and has not led to increased transmission. The data has proven that schools are the safest place for our children.

Monitor to Stay will bring immediate relief to the frequent and repeated quarantines that continue to impact student learning and place a burden on working families. It will help ensure that more students can remain in school and that schools can provide a safe, in-person learning environment for our students and staff.

Test to Play

Athletes and coaches participating in high-risk sports including hockey, wrestling, and gymnastics should participate in testing two times per week. Athletes and coaches will be advised of dates/times for testing.

We strongly recommend to all districts that student athletes and coaches participate in weekly BINAX (antigen) testing beginning January 18, 2022.

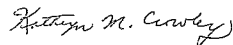
This system will mitigate the quarantining of students who are otherwise healthy and/or asymptomatic students from participation, as a result of being a close contact.

Student participation in the Test to Play system should be based on receipt of a valid parental consent form.

It is our hope that if schools in Rhode Island follow the same COVID guidelines as set forth from CDC and RIDOH, families and staff will benefit from the consistency and clear communication of these protocols.

Additionally, this will allow healthy children and staff, who are either asymptomatic or provide negative tests to be allowed to go to work and school.

Respectfully,



Kathryn M. Crowley
Superintendent of Schools