



October 23, 2020

Dear HVWS Families,

We have been blessed with an abundance of beautiful autumn weather allowing students to remain outdoors as much as possible each day. The local 10-day forecast continues to predict temperatures approaching 60 degrees. However, the HVWS faculty and COVID-19 Task Force are keenly aware that as we move toward winter, weather will not always be as conducive to outdoor instruction for certain classes. In addition, we are paying careful attention to the rising number of positive COVID-19 cases in CT.

Recent headlines regarding COVID-19 trends are no doubt anxiety-provoking. We want to assure you that we are staying informed well beyond headlines. Our COVID-19 Coordinator, Christina Dixcy, participates in a minimum of two weekly calls to gain the most up-to-date information and insights for Connecticut schools, one with fellow COVID Coordinators in the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), and one organized by the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Education (CSDE) with Public School Superintendents and Medical Directors. Our COVID-19 Task Force is meeting regularly to discuss best practices and reassess our plans as needed.

The state is sharing weekly updates for schools on key COVID-19 metrics, updated on Thursdays and available at <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Reopening/ddy2-ijgu>. This data supports local district decision-making on the level of in-person, hybrid (blended), and remote learning models for Pre-K-12 education. The key leading indicator to support decision-making on the level of in-person education recommended by DPH and CSDE is:

1. The number of new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 population per day (14-day average).

Additionally, the DPH and CSDE have identified three secondary indicators:

1. Percent test positivity (# of positive tests/# of total tests, 14-day average),
2. Number of new COVID-19 hospitalizations per 100,000 population (14-day average),
3. COVID-like and Influenza-like Illness (CLI and ILI) Syndromic Surveillance (14-day average).

Three of Connecticut's eight counties have moved from Low to Moderate risk over the past few weeks, and Fairfield county is on the brink of moving into Moderate risk as well. During our COVID-19 Task Force meetings we are keeping an eye on both Fairfield County's rates as well as Newtown's and will use these numbers to inform any scheduling or remote learning decision-making. We are reviewing our indoor classroom arrangements, making sure that when indoor classes are necessary, we are maximizing both space and airflow. The DPH still emphasizes that schools are among the safest places to be outside of the home because of the consistent application of mitigation strategies. We are working together daily to reinforce these strategies. We wish to remain on campus for as long as feasible.

To reiterate from our last communication, our families have been doing an excellent job of erring on the side of caution in the realm of student and teacher health and we thank you for this. As we move into flu season, the Daily Attestation of Health (attached) remains critical. In any year it is important for sick children to remain home because home is the best place for rest and recovery. This year, remaining home during an illness--any illness--is even more important. Please know that as CT's numbers creep up, we may switch to a self-reporting system that will require parents to log into the parent portal to submit the Daily Attestation of Health directly each morning.

Contact Tracing in our state has indicated that the spread of coronavirus is happening through small social gatherings. As you should be aware, the CDC and the State of Connecticut have advised against traditional Halloween activities such as door-to-door trick-or-treating. Please take these recommendations to heart and make careful decisions regarding social activities.

Additionally, we are keenly aware that many of us have not seen beloved family members in many months and we have holidays on the horizon that often involve travel. Currently the Governor is advising all CT residents to limit non-essential out-of-state travel. Our state's travel restrictions have recently been modified, in part because as they stood before, CT would have been on its own list. If your family is traveling out of state to an area deemed high risk, your family members (those who travel) will need to quarantine for fourteen days or receive a negative PCR test to end the quarantine. Please be aware in advance that students (and staff) who may travel to a high-risk area out of state over the holidays may not attend school until the travel quarantine requirements have been met. Any days spent in a travel quarantine will be treated as sick days and will not involve a remote learning program. You may check the current travel advisories here: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/travel>.

Ultimately, we are all called into this community on behalf of children, educating and raising children. Thank you for sharing this blessing and responsibility with us, particularly in this difficult time.

In health,  
The HVWS COVID-19 Task Force