

# NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

212 Main Street, Room 200  
Northampton, MA 01060-3112  
Tel (413) 587-1331      FAX (413) 587-1318      TDD (413) 587-1373

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Honorable David Narkewicz, Mayor  
Rebecca Busansky      Sean Condon  
Roni Gold      Kaia Goleman  
Laura Fallon      Lonnie Kaufman  
Dina Levi      Emily Serafy-Cox  
Susan Voss



**John A. Provost, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

**Nick Bernier**  
Business Administrator

December 30, 2021

Dear Caregivers:

We hope you are enjoying a safe and restful holiday. Through these past 21 months, we have come together as a community to keep each other and our loved ones safe. At this time, we are seeing a continued increase in COVID-19 cases in our region and our community. The transmissibility of the Omicron variant and holiday travel make this a time when increased vigilance is warranted. We expect to experience the peak of the current COVID wave in the next several weeks. To get through this period it is imperative that we work together and follow the guidance from our public health officials and contact tracers. To manage the next stage of the pandemic and make our school reopening as safe as possible, we will be implementing the following protocols:

- 1) The district will implement a staggered opening to implement pooled testing on the day students return to school. **NHS and JFK will open as planned on January 3rd** and pooled testing will be completed at both schools on that day. **Bridge Street, Jackson Street, Leeds and Ryan Road will not reopen until January 4th.** Pooled testing will occur in those four schools on the 4th. Due to mold remediation at the beginning of the school year, both NHS and JFK are one day behind the four elementary schools. The staggered start will align the last day of school across the district. Based on our experience with this program, we expect to have all results back by January 6th which is a school holiday. To increase safety while we are waiting for results, KN95 or surgical masks will be mandatory for all students and staff (except those who cannot wear a mask due to medical or behavioral needs) on **January 3rd, 4th, and 5th.** The district will provide these masks for students and staff. [Surgical](#) or KN95/KF94 masks provide [significantly better protection](#) than cloth masks against the transmissible omicron variant.
- 2) The district will provide KN-95 masks for all district staff. **We strongly recommend that all staff wear these masks.** The district will also distribute test kits to staff on Sunday January 2nd so they can test themselves for potential positivity after the holiday break.
- 3) The district may be implementing a COVID-19 Surge Protocol. This protocol was developed jointly by the Northampton Public Schools and the Northampton Public Health Department to handle the increased demand of contact tracing during periods of increased positive COVID cases in schools. This Surge Protocol may be initiated at the discretion of the Superintendent, or Director of Health Services when there is an

increase in cases district wide. Under the Surge Protocol, close contacts will still be identified, however staff and students that are identified will NOT receive an individualized phone call. Instead, all identified close contacts will be emailed a letter outlining quarantine and test and stay options. The email message will be sent using our ASPEN and google email system and caregivers will need to check their emails nightly for communication from the school. **If this protocol is activated, a general message will be sent to the NPS community so that everyone will be aware of the need to check their email for potential information from contact tracers.**

Students identified as close contacts will remain in school for the remainder of the day, masked and distanced.

**Students identified as close contacts who are participating in the test-and-stay program may remain in school as long as they are asymptomatic and test negative. Any student identified as a close contact who does not have consent to participate in the test-and-stay program will not be able to return to school until consent is obtained or the full quarantine period is completed.** Under the current protocol, test and stay only pertains to the academic day and does not extend to community acquired close contacts. Individuals participating in test and stay will need to follow quarantine protocols when outside of the school day, including weekends if the testing period falls on a non-school day. Participation in athletics and school-sponsored after school activities is considered part of the school day. Individuals participating in the test-and-stay program can also access these activities.

When the Surge Protocol is no longer in effect, a general message will be sent to the NPS community notifying everyone that we will be resuming the usual procedure to notify close contacts.

- 4) Until at least January 18th, attendance at all NPS athletic events will be limited to immediate family members of student-athletes.
  
- 5) The Center for Disease Control and Prevention issued updated COVID-19 isolation and quarantine recommendations and The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has formally adopted these changes, effective immediately. We are awaiting guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on how they will interpret these new recommendations; we will share more information when it is received.

Thank you for your continued support of our efforts to maintain the safety and continuity of learning in our community. We know that everyone has sacrificed so much during the pandemic. We sincerely believe these measures will give us the best opportunity to manage the current surge while maintaining high-quality learning experiences for our students.

Sincerely,



John A. Provost, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools



Lisa Safron, BSN, RN, NCSN  
Director of Health, Safety & Equity Programs