



BYRAM HILLS

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

10 TRIPP LANE ARMONK, NY 10504

December 29, 2021

To the Byram Hills School Community,

I hope that everyone is doing well and enjoying time with family. In a Superintendent's meeting yesterday with Governor Hochul and the new Commissioner of Health, Dr. Mary Bassett, we were told that schools will remain open in January and masks will continue to be mandated. There are three additional reasons why I am writing today. I want to give you revised protocols for school operations, revised protocols for COVID-19 isolation (if positive) and COVID-19 quarantines (if exposed).

Byram Hills will open its doors on January 3, 2022. I am not expecting everyone to read all of the details below now, but it is important that I share them with you. If you are a parent, you may refer to the protocols below in the event your child is Covid-19 positive or quarantined from exposure. If you are a staff member, please read the changes to quarantine and isolation periods below, as per the NYSDOH. We look forward to 2022 as a school community.

School Protocols and Quarantine Changes

The District understands that the new obstacles presented by COVID-19 and its variants require us to tighten protocols again in our schools. To that end, we have increased the distance between students at Coman Hill and HCC at lunch to reflect the distance between students that has already been established at Wampus. The distance will mean less quarantines. We will also reiterate the importance of proper mask wearing to our students and staff in school.

The new NYSDOH Guidance from 12/23 and 12/24 has changed quarantine periods. The main points from the documents are included below:

From 12/23 NYSDOH Guidance

1. NYSDOH supports Test-to-Stay (TTS) as a strategy that allows asymptomatic unvaccinated school-based close contacts (e.g. students, teachers, school staff) to avoid school exclusion (but not other restrictions of quarantine) by testing negative through antigen tests during a seven-day period following exposure. Should you find yourself in this position, the school nurse or assistant principal will provide you with the information on daily testing. Know that the exposure must have occurred in the school setting.
2. COVID-19 Testing of Symptomatic Vaccinated and Unvaccinated Persons

Persons with COVID-19 symptoms can participate in school activities following a negative NAAT or antigen test result, regardless of vaccination status.

Symptomatic individuals must also be well enough to participate in school, not have rhinorrhea (runny nose) or cough severe enough to make mask wearing difficult or unhygienic, be fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication.



The following requirements remain in place:

- a. Individuals with symptoms that are attributable to pre-existing medical conditions (e.g., migraines, allergies) and are not new or worsening do not require school exclusion or testing.
- b. If the healthcare provider makes a diagnosis of a confirmed non-COVID-19 acute illness (e.g., laboratory-confirmed influenza or strep-throat) AND COVID-19 is not suspected, then a note signed by the healthcare provider explaining the alternate diagnosis may be provided to allow a student, teacher, or staff member to participate in school without COVID-19 testing.

For School Staff From 12/24/21 NYSDOH Guidance

1. Advisory on Shortening Isolation Period for Certain Fully Vaccinated Other Critical Workforce

This NYS guidance below applies to fully vaccinated staff who work in schools.

Guidance for return-to-work during isolation

Employees may return to work after day 5 of their isolation period (where day zero is defined as either date of symptom onset if symptomatic, or date of collection of first positive test if asymptomatic).

Employees in this case must meet all of the following criteria:

- The individual is fully vaccinated
- The individual is asymptomatic, or, if they had mild symptoms, when they return to work they must:
- Fever-free for at least 72 hours without fever-reducing medication
- Have resolution of symptoms or, if still with residual symptoms, then all are improving
- Have no more than minimal, non-productive cough (i.e., not disruptive to work and does not stop the person from wearing their mask continuously).
- The individual is able to consistently and correctly wear a well-fitting face mask while at work. Face masks should be disposable, non-woven masks.
- Individuals who are moderately to severely immunocompromised are not eligible to return to work under this guidance (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>).

Employees participating should:

- Practice social distancing from coworkers at all times except when job duties do not permit such distancing.



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- Remove their well-fitting facemask, for example, in order to eat or drink, they should separate themselves from others.
- Self-monitor for symptoms and seek re-evaluation from occupational health or their personal healthcare provider if symptoms recur or worsen.

PENDING

NYSDOH and WCDOH need to parse through the new CDC 5-day quarantine guidance for students and let us know asap if we will be able to do this.

1. "Test Out of Quarantine" *Pending approval from WCDOH*

NYSDOH has received questions as to whether it is acceptable to allow students under quarantine to shorten their quarantine by receiving negative COVID-19 test results. If the WCDOH chooses to allow this practice, it must align with CDC recommendations, which are currently as follows: When diagnostic testing resources are sufficient and available, then quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen tests negative and if no symptoms were reported during daily monitoring. The specimen may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation (e.g., in anticipation of testing delays), but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than after Day 7. This is still pending approval by the WCDOH.

2. Use of Over-the-Counter Tests *Pending approval from WCDOH*

There are numerous COVID-19 antigen tests that have received United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), including over-the-counter (OTC) tests authorized for home or self-testing. The NYSDOH allows the use of such OTC tests for school purposes.

If using an OTC antigen test at home, a picture of a positive test or a negative test with the individual's name, date of birth, and date of testing in the picture must be sent to our school nurse. This is still pending approval by the WCDOH.

3. CDC Recommended Shortened Isolation and Quarantine Periods for STUDENTS *Pending approval from NYSDOH and WCDOH*

The CDC released [new guidance on 12/27/21](#) recommending a change in quarantine and isolation from 10 to 5 days for students. **We will wait for guidance on whether or not we can implement that in schools.**

I wish you all a happy and safe New Year and welcome in 2022 together.

Sincerely,

Jen Lamia, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools