

January 17, 2021

Happy Sunday Millbrook Families and Staff,

I can't believe we are already moving into our third week of January! I hope the New Year has been a little lighter and brighter than 2020 for all of you so far!!

Our return from the winter recess was smooth and productive. While a few COVID-19 positive cases were reported and are reflected in the NYS DOH dashboard, we have been fortunate in that the contacts have taken place outside of school and/or in a timeframe where the last day of school attendance was beyond the reach-back period for classifying others as close or proximate contacts. We anticipate seeing more COVID-19 positive cases as the winter progresses, based upon county-wide data, as the average positivity rate in the county based upon the past seven days is 8.5%. If the rate increases to 9% in Dutchess County, then there may be a requirement to conduct surveillance testing for COVID-19 as a condition for remaining open to in-person hybrid student instruction. If there are COVID-19 positive individuals within the school buildings that result in close and/or proximate contact to other individuals, we will, of course, conduct contact tracing in collaboration with the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health ("DBCH"). In such instances, notification will be provided in accordance with the provisions of our District reopening plan. It may be several days after you are initially contacted by the District regarding the need to quarantine that you receive official notification from a DBCH contact tracer. We will continue to strictly adhere to the Department of Health regulations as well as any other state or local mandates that may be forthcoming as the school year continues.

In preparation for a potential surveillance testing mandate that would be required to continue in-person instruction of students if one or more of the District's buildings were located within an area that is designated as a micro-cluster zone, you will soon be receiving a parent/guardian consent form for testing your child(ren) for COVID-19. This requirement would apply to in-person students only. While none of our school buildings are currently located within a designated micro-cluster zone, the criteria for micro-cluster zone designations have changed numerous times during the fall and are anticipated to change again in the near future. The test that we would use is called Abbot BinaxNOW; a rapid antigen test that involves inserting a shallow nasal swab into the front/sides of nostrils. Results take fifteen minutes to be determined. In the unlikely event that a student tests positive, the parent/guardian will be called immediately at which time the student would be sent to the isolation room to await pick-up and follow-up with their healthcare provider. Please note that surveillance testing is an effective way to monitor the positivity rate of COVID-19 in the school community by detecting and then isolating individuals who test positive in accordance with DOH requirements which reduces the chance of an outbreak in the school setting. That

being said, this testing would be for surveillance purposes only and not for diagnostic purposes. Rapid antigen tests may produce incorrect negative results (called “false negatives”) in people who have COVID-19. If your child tests negative, but soon thereafter develops symptoms of COVID-19, or if you have concerns about a possible exposure to COVID-19, you should contact your child's healthcare provider.

We will provide more information with the consent form, but just wanted you to be aware that this consent form would be forthcoming. In the event that we do not receive consent from the requisite number of students for testing, then one or more of our buildings would be required to close to in-person instruction until we could meet the required testing.

Under current state guidelines, none of the Millbrook schools are in locations with required testing. The Red and Orange Micro-cluster [state guidelines](#), which were updated on December 4, require testing of 30% and 20% of all in-person students, faculty, and staff for COVID-19 on a bi-weekly basis, respectively, during the span of a month. If the District is designated in a Yellow Micro-cluster Zone, then the District will be required to test 20% of the in-person student, faculty, and staff over a two-week period. In the event that the positivity rate in the [Yellow Zone](#) (based on a seven day rolling average) exceeds the percentage positivity rate in the school(s) located within a Yellow Zone, then testing will no longer be required to stay open to in-person student instruction. If, however, the positivity rate in the school(s) located within a Yellow Zone exceeds the positivity rate for the Yellow Zone, then the District will need to continue testing 20% of the in-person students, faculty, and staff on a bi-weekly basis in order to remain open. Without such testing, schools in a designed zone are not permitted to remain open for in-person instruction.

The vaccination program for COVID-19 is moving, though not as quickly as we would have hoped. Unfortunately, the State only receives an allocation of 300,000 vaccination per week, and there are approximately seven million people who are currently eligible in NYS to receive the vaccination. Thankfully, all of our school employees are eligible for the vaccine at this time, but we must be patient as appointments can be challenging to obtain. As demand for the vaccination greatly exceeds the supply, we must continue to vigilantly take all necessary precautions to mitigate against the spread of COVID -19 throughout the remainder of the school year (i.e. mask-wearing, proper hand hygiene, and social distancing in the school setting).

A few reminders, please continue to complete our health screener each day that your child(ren) is coming to school for in-person instruction (you are all doing a great job! - thank you). Please avoid any gatherings that involve more than the members of your household. Please also do your best to avoid out-of-state travel. If travel is necessary, please remember that only the five states adjacent to New York (Connecticut,

Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont) are exempt from the New York State required quarantine for out-of-state travel that exceeds 24 hours. As always, wash hands frequently and wear face coverings at all times when you are in the presence of individuals other than your immediate household members.

This has been a long and difficult journey for everyone. With the rollout of the vaccine program, we can see the end of these restrictions and maybe some kind of normalcy in sight, but for now, we must persevere and continue to exercise great caution for the health and safety of our community.

Sincerely,

Laura

Your Proud Superintendent of Schools