

January 13, 2022

Dear Washington Central Community,

Well, it would be an understatement to say that the recently announced changes in COVID protocols by the Agency of Education have caused some concern and confusion in our school community. We are still awaiting formal written guidance from the Agency of Education. When we receive it, we will be able to more clearly communicate the changes in testing protocols and contact tracing. We are also in the process of using existing test supplies and receiving new test supplies related to the changes in testing protocols.

Last Thursday, January 6, we offered a second opportunity for surveillance testing. 789 students and staff members participated and we learned of 13 cases from that testing opportunity. This Monday, January 10 we offered our weekly opportunity. 765 students and staff members participated and we learned of 20 cases from that testing opportunity. Overall, this past week, as of today, we've had 35 cases that have affected our schools: Berlin (9), Calais (1), East Montpelier (3), Rumney (5), and U-32 (17).

We will continue to offer voluntary surveillance testing for as long as we can. At this point we are planning to offer surveillance testing on Wednesday, January 19 when we return from the long weekend and on Monday, January 24. We are also in the process of scheduling a vaccine booster clinic; we will share the details once the plans are finalized.

I want to express my gratitude for all who have stepped up to cover classes and other duties and to our school nurses who, lately, have borne the brunt of folks' anxiety about the changes. We know that in times of prolonged anxiety, uncertainty, and stress humans are more prone to respond from a place of emotion than from a place of logic; human beings are programmed that way! And, I implore everyone, myself included, to pause before responding and to ground our words and actions in kindness.

Next week our schools will be closed on Monday, January 17 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and on Tuesday, January 18 for an inservice day. On the morning of January 18 our staff will engage in work designed to deepen our understanding of issues related to equity, diversity, and civil rights and how they impact our practice as educators. The afternoon will be a professional work day devoted primarily to report cards.

I close with this quote from Dr. King: *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.*

As always, please reach out if you have any questions or concerns:
jmillerarsenault@u32.org or (802) 229-0553.

Warmly,
Jen Miller-Arsenault
Interim Superintendent