

January 20, 2022

Dear Washington Central Community,

I hope that this week's letter finds you well after the long weekend! Our teachers, paraeducators, and administrators participated in a productive and engaging inservice day on Tuesday. We focused on both racial equity and Act 173, Vermont's act related to providing effective and equitable services to students who require additional support. The afternoon was devoted to report card work and planning for the second semester. Report cards will be distributed late next week.

We are continuing to transition to the new COVID-19 guidance issued by our Agency of Education. We offered surveillance testing yesterday (604 participants) and will offer it again this coming Monday. That will be the last time that we are able to offer it.

We are transitioning to the Agency of Education's new ["Test at Home" protocol](#). We have received a shipment of rapid antigen testing kits for students and staff. In the elementary schools, schools notify families if their child is considered a "presumptive contact" and they will determine together how best to send home a take home testing kit. At U-32, Maria Melekos has been emailing daily case counts and attendance rates to families. In order to facilitate the distribution of rapid antigen test kits to U-32 students, we're asking families to complete [this online consent form](#). Please understand we are unable to pass out medical tests to minors without parent/guardian permission. We are still getting used to this new testing protocol and may revise our implementation strategies when we have more experience with it. We'll let you know!

Maria has arranged a vaccine clinic for anyone **ages 5 and older** to receive a first dose, a second dose, or a booster (you can choose from all three options). It will take place this Saturday, January 22 from 11:00-3:00 at U-32. We are asking people to pre-register, but we will accept walk-ins as long as the vaccine supply lasts. To pre-register, please visit the Vermont [Department of Health](#), scroll down to the map and find the box over the map. The link to pre-register is right there. If you got your previous vaccinations at a pharmacy, the site may not let you register. **Please feel free to just walk-in!**

This week we have had 23 positive cases: 5 cases at U-32, 2 cases at Rumney, 8 cases at Berlin, 3 cases at Calais, 4 cases at EMES, and 1 case at Doty. Not all of these cases directly affected the schools.

Each week Maria and our school nurses meet with our pediatric MD liaison to ask questions, examine our practices, and review the current context. I had the opportunity

to join them last week. It was wonderful to connect with our entire team in the midst of so many changes. A key takeaway for me was the idea that our schools are reducing the risk of transmission; we are not eliminating it. We know that the infection rates in our schools are much lower than the rates in the community at large, and that is so reassuring; our mitigation strategies—staying home when sick, wearing masks, washing our hands, getting vaccinated and boosted as eligible, maintaining physical distance when possible, and podding when possible—are working.

It's looking like tomorrow is going to be another frigid day. Please plan accordingly. We crack windows on the buses to increase airflow, so bus riders should plan for a chilly ride. And, remember, families may leave a backpack at the bus stop as a signal to our bus drivers that students are riding that day while they wait for the bus in a warmer location. Finally, we will almost definitely need to have indoor recess in the elementary schools tomorrow, so any outdoor mask breaks will be brief.

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

Warmly,
Jen Miller-Arsenault
Interim Superintendent