

October 21, 2021

Dear Washington Central Community,

This week 655 students and staff members participated in COVID surveillance testing and we had no positive cases that impacted our schools. Given the high case count in the state recently, I am especially grateful to all of you who are working so hard to keep each other safe and keep our students in school. Thank you!

Regarding the “Test to Stay” program (TTS), we are waiting for the State to roll out the consent form process. Our schools are poised to implement the program shortly thereafter. The purpose of TTS is to keep unvaccinated, asymptomatic students in school. Students who test negative will be allowed to remain in school. They will still need to quarantine for activities outside of school, including sports and other after school activities. TTS is intended for use in the event of in-school exposure. We look forward to sharing more information with you when we have it.

There has been a lot of news lately about the impact of stress on behaviors in school. Indeed, just this morning I received an article in my inbox entitled *Stress and short tempers: Schools struggle with behavior as students return*. A section of that same article is entitled *It's like we've forgotten how to socialize*. It is true that some of our students are experiencing stress, and it is manifesting in various ways. That is perfectly normal, and, after all, our students have not experienced a full typical school year since 2018-2019.

It is also true that some of our staff members are experiencing stress. In addition to the general anxiety and uncertainty and fatigue associated with the pandemic, we remain understaffed. Our staff are continuously exercising flexibility and generosity when it comes to stepping up to fill the void in service to our students. And that can be tiring.

I am sharing this now in part because last night, with great intentionality, our school board explicitly expressed appreciation to our staff for their hard work. They carved out time during a packed agenda to pause and acknowledge our staff's work during these stressful times. This act of slowing down in order to express gratitude and kindness meant a lot to me and is one that I hope we can all emulate as we work together to support our students.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns. My email address is [jmillerarsenault@u32.org](mailto:jmillerarsenault@u32.org) and my phone number is 229-0553.

Warmly,

Jen Miller-Arsenault  
Interim Superintendent