

March 17, 2022

Dear Washington Central Community,

This was a big week for us! All of our schools became mask optional this past Monday. I am so pleased to report to you that our students have demonstrated empathy and understanding about the different choices that people have made regarding masking this week. I want to express my gratitude to our families and staff members for talking with our students and each other last week in preparation for the change in practice. I believe those conversations contributed to the smooth transition and are yet another indication of our coming together as a school community to support each other.

Earlier this week Maria Melekos, our COVID-19 Coordinator, shared the updated COVID-19 health recommendations from the Vermont Department of Health. Please read [her letter](#) if you haven't yet had an opportunity to do so. Additionally, the Vermont Agency of Education rescinded its school-specific guidance on March 14. Schools are no longer required to contact trace or provide notice to families of positive cases. Given the changes in guidance, testing protocols, and reporting requirements, I will no longer be including a case count in the weekly community letter, and we are no longer notifying families and staff of positive cases in school. Should our CDC community metric and guidelines change again, we will revisit this practice.

Last night the school board approved the [2022-23 school calendar](#). We have posted it on our district website. The school calendar includes 5 contingency days in June for inclement weather or other school closures. One of the contingency days is Monday, June 19, which is Juneteenth. Juneteenth recognizes June 19, 1865, the date when many enslaved African Americans in Texas learned that they had been freed, two years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth officially became a federal holiday on June 17, 2021, and the school board recognizes that we may need to make a potential correction to the calendar accordingly.

Regarding the contingency days this school year... We typically make a decision about the last day of school around April break when there is little to no risk of a spring snowstorm (I can't tell you how happy I was that last week's snowstorm took place on Saturday instead of a weekday!). Stay tuned in the next month or so for that decision. In the meantime, please mark your calendars for the following events which we've set regardless of the last day of school. This year our 8th grade celebration will take place on Wednesday, June 15, 6th grade celebrations will take place on Thursday, June 16, and our high school graduation will take place on Friday, June 17. How awesome it will be to celebrate these milestones together!

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