

March 3, 2022

Dear Washington Central Community,

I hope that this letter finds you all rested and recharged after a break from the school routine. I find that the weeks between our February and April breaks can be ones of deep and focused learning, and I am looking forward to diving into them.

We've had very few reports of COVID-19 cases during and since the February break. We've had 4 reported cases (3 at U-32 and 1 at Calais), none of which have impacted our schools.

As you may know, last week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention revised its guidance regarding prevention steps. The CDC is using a tool that recommends prevention steps by county based on an assessment of the use of hospital beds, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases. As of today, Washington County is high. The [CDC recommendations](#) for Washington County include masking indoors in public, staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines, getting tested if symptomatic, and additional precautions for folks who are at high risk for severe illness.

Throughout the pandemic we have made decisions about our mitigation strategies based on science. We are taking a close look at the new CDC guidance along with the guidance of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the VT Agency of Education, and the VT Department of Health and will make decisions about masking and other mitigation strategies accordingly. For now, as Maria Melekos and I shared prior to February break, we are requiring masks in all of our schools regardless of vaccination rate. Please stay tuned for more information about next steps in the days ahead as we learn more, monitor our data, and determine how best to respond to changing guidance at the state level. We anticipate finalizing our strategy for moving forward early next week.

At last night's community forum I shared a presentation about some of our curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices related to Artistic Expression, one of our Student Learning Outcomes. I must say that putting the presentation together was an absolute joy. It's hard to look at student artworks, listen to students' musical performances, or watch a student theater or dance performance without smiling! I invite you all to check out the [slideshow](#). It contains many examples of student work. I hope it brings a smile to your faces as well. Thanks to all who contributed to the presentation!

Looking ahead, parent teacher conferences are scheduled to take place on Friday, March 25. Since the spring of 2020 we have offered these conferences remotely only. One silver lining of the pandemic has been even more robust attendance at parent teacher

conferences. Anecdotally, many families have reported that meeting virtually has made conferences more accessible. Even when it becomes safer to welcome visitors into our buildings, I suspect that we will maintain an option for virtual conferences as a supportive measure for families. We value our partnership with our families, and attending parent teacher conferences is one way to strengthen and sustain the partnership. Schools will send more information about our plans for this spring's parent teacher conferences, including sign up information, in the days ahead.

I have some visceral memories of being terrified as an elementary school student after hearing about some national and world events. I imagine that many of our students, and many of us, are experiencing some degree of fear and sadness and disbelief in response to the invasion of Ukraine. I am hopeful that we will process our own emotions, and help our students process theirs, in ways that foster thoughtful, informed, and engaged citizenship in both our local and global communities.

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

Warmly,  
Jen Miller-Arsenault  
Interim Superintendent