



# Colchester Public Schools

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Dear Colchester Families,

We encourage everyone to continue to adhere to the strategies that have proven effective in mitigating the transmission of COVID-19: wearing masks, frequent hand washing, stringent cleaning protocols, and practicing social distancing. Our community rate has dropped to just over 10 per 100,000 from 14.3, while surrounding towns have reported an increase. We have documented 6 cases of coronavirus among students since the beginning of the school year- yet, we have no documented cases of student-to-student or student-to-staff transmission. I applaud our staff and students for following protocols and procedures in place to keep everyone safe, healthy, and present in our schools.

We are still prioritizing the increase of “in-person” time in our schools in November, and at this time I will continue to recommend that we move forward with our full, in-person plan for grades PK through 5 beginning November 12. Our instructional model will be determined officially on November 2, 2020. Please refer to the [detailed letter](#) sent out last week for more information.

## **Infection Rate Data Determines the Model of Instruction**

Every Thursday the CT Department of Public Health releases data regarding the **fourteen day rolling average of COVID-19 infection rates by town and county**. The District’s COVID-19 Task Force - composed of Administrators, our medical advisor, and Chatham Public Health - reviews the data weekly and makes a recommendation regarding the appropriate model of instruction for Colchester Public Schools. It is important to note that the DPH and state experts have stated that the standards for schools can be different than the community standards. They are basing this statement on state-wide data that shows little to no student-to-student transmission, even in the 50% of schools that are in a full, in-person model across the state.

If the local infection rate increases significantly prior to the release of the weekly rolling average data, the District could be advised by the Governor or CT Department of Public Health to place the District in remote learning for 14 days. Other data sources taken into consideration are:

- [Connecticut COVID-19 Data Tracker](#)
- [COVID-19 Update October 29, 2020](#)
- [CT School Learning Model Indicators | Connecticut Data](#)
- [Connecticut Rt: COVID Reproduction Rate](#)
- [Connecticut Covid Map and Case Count](#)

### **Snow/Inclement Weather Days: Remote Learning**

Recent changes in state guidelines allows for districts to utilize remote learning instead of cancelling school for inclement weather. The district will be enacting remote days instead of cancelling school for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. These remote days will follow a similar schedule to our current Wednesday remote days. In addition, pickup meal service will be available (details to follow). School will be cancelled, however, if a weather event causes wide-spread power outages in the region as that would significantly impact our ability to provide distance learning. A message will be sent out early in the morning of a potential weather day indicating either a remote day or a cancellation. At this time, not all of the alert systems on TV and radio stations have been updated to allow us to post a "remote learning day," so please ensure that you are [signed up for our School Messenger email and text alerts](#). Information will also be posted on our website. School delays and cancellations will still be posted on news sites.

### **Travel Out of State**

With holidays approaching, I'd like to share [official guidance](#) from the State of Connecticut on traveling out of state. We also request that you limit unnecessary travel and engagement with other families and friends. I know this is a big request as the holidays approach; however, we will not be able to keep our schools open without everyone's help. While I cannot mandate how families conduct themselves, I can stress the fact that each new case puts a burden on our resources (teaching staff and substitutes) and inevitably may result in school closures if we do not see a lowering of the cases being reported and a reduction in the numbers needing to be quarantined. We need the Colchester community to help the District in doing what you can at home to support our efforts.

### **Contact Tracing**

Please contact the school nurse if your child or anyone they have come into contact has tested positive, is being tested, or is showing symptoms. We require this information in order to reduce the impact and notify any close contacts immediately, as we owe a high level of response to everyone who may have been impacted.

### **Be Prepared for Changes to Education Model**

If the infection rates within our schools increase significantly, we will have to adjust our model of instruction. Based on infection rate data, a classroom, cohort, school, or entire district may be required to move away from all in-person instruction to hybrid instruction or full remote learning. Also, there may be instances when an individual school will have to close for one or more days in order to complete contact tracing. **It is important for each family to develop a plan for childcare if any of the above scenarios must be implemented on short notice.**

### **Schedule for Upcoming Week**

- Monday, November 2nd: Group 1 in-person; Group 2 distance learning
- **Tuesday, November 3rd: DISTANCE LEARNING DAY (Election Day)**
- Wednesday, November 4th: Group 1 in-person; Group 2 distance learning
- Thursday, November 5th: Group 2 in-person; Group 1 distance learning
- Friday, November 6th: Group 2 in-person; Group 1 distance learning

### **Have a question or concern?**

- **EMAILS**  
General questions: [covid19@colchesterct.org](mailto:covid19@colchesterct.org)

Tech questions: [techhelp@colchesterct.org](mailto:techhelp@colchesterct.org)  
BOE questions: [boardquestions@colchesterct.org](mailto:boardquestions@colchesterct.org)

Frequently asked questions: [CPS Parent FAQ](#). For the most current update on COVID-19, please visit [ct.gov/coronavirus](http://ct.gov/coronavirus).

Please continue to keep everyone in your family safe and healthy. Working together, we can ensure our staff and students can enjoy the benefits of in-person instruction.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Burt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Burt, Superintendent