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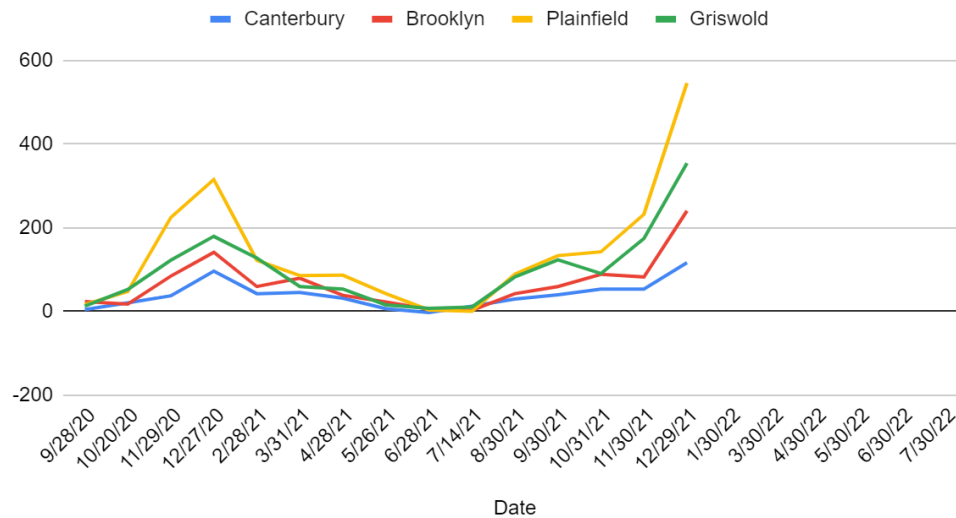
January 4, 2022

Dear Parents and Families,

I want to wish you all a happy new year. I hope you had an enjoyable holiday break. I also wanted to provide you with a brief update regarding the new recently released CDC guidelines.

Over the past several days there has been a significant increase in the number of COVID cases in our region. Below is a chart reflecting the estimated number of monthly COVID cases in our area. You can see from the chart, Canterbury has had a slight increase in cases over the same time period last year, but there are significant increases in neighboring towns.

Canterbury, Brooklyn, Plainfield and Griswold - Monthly Rates



On December 27, 2021 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released updated guidance regarding the duration of quarantine and isolation for COVID-19. On December 31, 2021 the Connecticut DPH released their own updated guidance for school districts that allows them the choice to make changes in their operating rules regarding quarantine, isolation, testing, and return to in-school activities. In general, these suggested changes shift the focus from contact tracing to isolating individuals with symptoms.

Administration and school nurses have reviewed this new DPH and SDE guidance and received additional insights from DPH from a webinar on Tuesday, January 4.

At this time, a student's quarantine or isolation period will remain 10 days until January 12. The DPH guidance currently allows the quarantining period to be reduced to five days. However, Canterbury Schools currently have about 50 students home due to being exposed to COVID-19 or having COVID-19 symptoms. It is our intention to fully adopt the recommendations once this current surge of infections subsides. A copy of the DPH guidance is on our website. Our nurses have been in contact with families regarding students' return dates to school.

Below are a few shared responses to frequently asked questions:

Q. Why are these changes being recommended?

There are a number of reasons (see the State guidance), but the three most important are:

- the low numbers of confirmed, in-school transmissions;
- the significant number of hours nurses, office professionals and administrators must dedicate to contact tracing;
- and the known and significant impact that quarantining has on both students and their families.

Q. What are the changes being considered based on the recommendations of DPH and CSDE?

1. Reduction of isolation from 10 to 5 days for all cases as long as the staff or student member is fever free and major symptom free for 24 hours. *(Will be implemented in Canterbury at a future date.)*
2. Discontinue individual contact tracing. Phone calls to individual families regarding cases of COVID-19 will no longer be made. We will continue to notify school communities where the case(s) has occurred.
3. Screen and stay will no longer be necessary as it is essentially embedded in the new guidance without the signoff page.

Q. Any changes to mitigation strategies?

No, our current mitigation strategies will continue, including mandatory wearing of masks for all staff and students. We will continue to review the guidance from the state and continue to update families if we have additional changes to our strategies.

Q. Are there any changes to after school activities or school sponsored sports?

It is still unclear if the new recommendations apply to extracurricular activities so the activities will continue following the existing guidelines until further notice.

Q. What do I do if my child has any COVID-19 symptoms but no known contact?

Your child should NOT report to school regardless of vaccination status. Remain isolated at home, contact the school nurse, contact your primary health care provider, get tested, and do not return to school until fever free for 24 hours and no major symptoms (see list below).

- Fever above 100.4 when taken by mouth
- Chills, muscle pain, body aches
- Shortness of breath
- Cough (or new uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing for students with chronic allergies/asthma)
- Diarrhea, vomiting or abdominal pain
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose

- New onset of severe headache, especially with fever
- Loss of taste or smell

Q. Will a school close if the number of cases continues to rise?

In general, no. The only reason we would close a school would be due to a staffing issue and those days would need to be made up at the end of the school year. The district will continue to make decisions regarding classroom, team or grade quarantining on a case by case basis. Typically, the primary elementary grades are subject to class level quarantining due to the close interactions of our youngest learners.

Q. Can the district make the decision to go remote for all schools?

No, over the break, the state reiterated that remote instruction this year is a decision by the state that requires action from the Governor's Office or the state legislature.

Q. Is there a remote option for students?

No, the only at-home instructional options that are considered are for students who are quarantining or isolating. There is no voluntary, at-home learning option available as per state guidelines. Additionally, Canterbury lacks the staffing resources to dedicate individual remote learning experiences.