



Southbridge Public Schools

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January 8, 2021

Dear Families,

This week as we returned to school after the holiday break, students settled into their regular routines. In this week's Massachusetts Department of Public Health update of COVID-19 data, Southbridge was again in the "red" category for the average daily incident rate, with another decrease within the red category. While the positive test rate for COVID-19 in Southbridge remains high, we continue to have a positive test rate of less than one percent at school. This indicates that our mitigation strategies have been effective and that our schools are a safe place for student learning and for access to school meals, social emotional support, and other resources that are important to students and families during the pandemic.

This week the Commissioner of Education released an update on the MCAS assessment for 2021. This memo states in part: "The extent of the learning loss in the Commonwealth is not yet known. The Department continues to believe the MCAS test is a crucial diagnostic tool to promote student success and educational equity and we remain committed to administering the assessment this spring, while recognizing the need for adjustments and flexibility." We will let you know about any further updates that are released. That memo is [linked here](#) in English. We expect to also have a Spanish version of the memo available on our website next week.

In response to questions from the community about quarantine periods for close contacts, we'd like to clarify that a staff member or student who is identified as a close contact must quarantine for 14 days. This exceeds the [minimum quarantine](#) period provided by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and strengthens our efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus. The decision to require 14-day quarantine periods was made in collaboration with the [Southbridge Board of Health](#).

As a reminder, close contacts are defined as anyone having been within 6 feet of the individual for a total of at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period within 2 days of testing positive for COVID-19. The close contacts that we list are within the school community of staff and students. Close contacts at home are not included in our determination. This is why some positive cases occur among siblings who were already in quarantine due to a known exposure outside of school.

We are grateful to our families for their continued efforts to keep students home at the first sign of symptoms. You can send any questions to help@southbridgepublic.org or ayuda@southbridgepublic.org. You can also call or text (774) 601-0082 with questions about any aspect of school. Please direct questions about remote learning to your child's school.

Regards,

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Receiver/Superintendent
Southbridge Public Schools

