



Important IUFSD COVID Updates

December 21, 2021

Dear Irvington School Community,

It is important that we are responsive to the changes that COVID-19 has recently brought upon all of us. Across the region, we have seen the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses, the entertainment industry, and our daily lives. Over recent weeks, we have also seen a notable increase in the prevalence of the virus among students and staff. As a result, the District is beginning to make adjustments to its current plans and is considering additional options for the future.

*While this communication is long, please take time to **read everything** closely as all of the content is extremely important. **Parental action is required in multiple areas!***

There are four (4) important messages in this email:

1. Reporting COVID-19 cases over the Holiday Recess;
2. Change in how the District addresses quarantine through a Test to Stay program for students only;
3. Eliminating the 24-hour waiting period for students who are required to quarantine to participate in remote instruction; and
4. Preparing for fully remote instruction at any time after the Holiday Recess. **The District is NOT planning to close for in-person learning.** However, if the necessity arises through the District's decision or by the decision of a governmental agency, we will be ready to proceed with high-quality synchronous virtual teaching and learning.

While this is all overwhelming, and our minds are focused on getting to the holiday recess and celebrating with family and friends, it is important that the District continue to be nimble and respond to the changing conditions around us.

Reporting COVID-19 Cases and Quarantine Orders During Holiday Recess

While the District is closed for the Holiday Recess, it is inevitable that there will be cases of COVID-19 diagnosed. All parents are asked to report confirmed cases or exposures to the District as soon as you are aware of a positive test result [by completing this form](#). For your convenience, a link to this form has also been posted on the District website.

Revised Quarantine Practices

As a District, we recognize that there has been an increase in COVID-19 cases in the school community. When students are required to quarantine, the District wants to ensure that the impacts on learning are minimized. Therefore, the current 24-hour waiting period to establish remote learning will be eliminated at IMS and IHS. Effective Monday, January 3rd, secondary-school students who are required to quarantine will be able to access remote learning the next school day. At the elementary level, the model for remote learning differs from the secondary level. As a result, depending on the time of day that notification is provided to the school and a student is confirmed to be in quarantine, a student at the elementary level may need to wait to join the remote classroom until the following school day.

Test to Stay

Effective Monday, January 3, 2021, the Irvington UFSD will begin to implement Test to Stay (TTS). Test to Stay is an option for unvaccinated, asymptomatic students, but not staff members per NYSDOH guidelines, who must quarantine as a result of being identified as a close contact to an individual who is a lab positive case of COVID-19. In TTS, an asymptomatic, unvaccinated student who has to quarantine can participate in rapid antigen testing (RAT) on a daily basis in the District. Students participating in TTS may not ride the bus to school. They must be driven to Dows Lane Elementary School Gymnasium for testing. If a student tests negative, they will be permitted to 1) stay in school that day and 2) will be permitted to ride the school bus home that day. However, students participating in TTS will not be permitted to participate in any extracurricular activities, as per NYSDOH restrictions. Additionally, students will have to participate in TTS for seven (7) consecutive days. Testing will be administered by an individual trained to do so.

For a student to participate in TTS, parents must grant consent for the testing to occur at the school using the form linked below.

Important note: TTS will not impact those who are fully vaccinated, as those individuals are already excluded from quarantining so long as they are asymptomatic.

PLEASE READ ALL DETAILS BELOW CAREFULLY

TTS Q&A

When will TTS start?

IUFSD will begin the TTS program on Monday, January 3, 2022 for students ONLY, not staff, who are required to quarantine.

Who is Eligible for TTS?

TTS is an option for students who must quarantine due to close contact to a confirmed positive COVID-19 case. To be eligible, students must be asymptomatic. The District will not provide testing for symptomatic individuals who must continue to quarantine at home.

How do I have my child participate in TTS?

When a student is required to quarantine as a result of being identified as a lab positive case of COVID-19, they will be able to participate in TTS. A TTS appointment window will be made for individuals interested in participating. TTS will be held daily in a central location, the Dows Lane Gymnasium from 6:45 am-7:45 am daily. Students must be accompanied by their parent or guardian.

[Parents must grant consent for their child to participate in the TTS program by completing this form.](#) Without such active consent, a student will be required to quarantine if they are determined to be a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.

How does TTS affect in-person attendance and participation in other school-sponsored activities?

TTS is designed to allow students to participate with in-person instruction. It does not apply to extra-curricular activities such as athletics, band, chorus, orchestra, and clubs that occur outside of school hours.

Does TTS impact quarantining outside of school?

Students must remain under quarantine for the full 10-day period, while outside of school, and wear a face mask at all times. Thus, the benefits of TTS only apply to daily school attendance.

TTS Program Specifics

Length of Program:

Students must test every school morning for seven days. If the seventh day falls on a day when school is not in session, testing on the eighth day is required. Individuals who test negative on day seven, or later as noted above, no longer have to participate in the

testing. However, if they are exposed to another positive case during the TTA period, the individual must restart the seven-day count. Individuals still remain under official quarantine through day 10 and cannot participate in any non-academic activities. If one does not participate in the TTS program, they will have to quarantine for 10 days.

Testing Location & Times:

All testing is conducted before school for each student. Individuals must be transported to school on their own--they are not allowed to ride the school bus. Testing will be conducted in the Dows Lane Elementary School Gymnasium daily from 6:45-7:45 am and students must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Test of Record:

TTS will utilize BinaxNOW *Rapid Antigen Test*, which is a Rapid Test (not a PCR). This is the same test that was used during the surveillance testing the District administered in the spring and is a lower nasal swab that will deliver results in 10-15 minutes. This test will be considered the final test; subsequent testing will not be allowed to override the original test. Individuals testing positive will be required to leave school promptly and will be kept isolated until departure.

Program Capacity:

As with all operations, there are capacity limits. The District will administer the TTS program until such time it does not have adequate staffing or tests available. Capacity limitations will be evaluated on a weekly basis, and the community will be advised if there are any changes to the program.

Preparing for Full Remote Instruction

The Irvington UFSD is **NOT** planning to shift to remote instruction. However, should conditions locally or regionally require it, the District will be prepared. To support this level of readiness, the District is taking the following steps this week:

1. Chromebooks will be distributed to all students in kindergarten through 5th grade on Wednesday, December 22nd. Dows Lane parents will be emailed a digital form to complete to confirm receipt of the device. In the school, proper documentation will be completed to ensure the District has a record of which student has which device. Parental action required: [All Dows Lane parents must complete this device form for their child.](#)
2. Students in grades 11 and 12 that had opted to not use a District-issued Chromebook and elected to use a personal device in school have one last chance to request a device. This special device distribution will be facilitated in the IHS atrium on Thursday, December 23rd between the hours of 9:00 am-12:30 pm. Those 11th and 12th graders newly requesting a device must complete this form.
3. Cameras and microphones will be tested in all classrooms for proper functioning.
4. Teachers will begin to bring instructional materials home with them to ensure they are prepared to shift to remote learning on short notice.

Clearly, this is not the message I had hoped to be sending to our school community just before the Holiday Recess. Unfortunately, these are the times in which we are living and these are the challenges we continue to face and that we, together, will continue to overcome. Despite this, we will remain focused on every student in our care to ensure that their needs are being met. Our community will remain resilient and support each other through these difficult times.

In closing, I share my sincere gratitude to every staff member for that which they do, day in and day out, for our students and their families. To our amazing parents, your continued support and encouragement is sincerely appreciated.

My best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

Sincerely,

Kris

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