



December 30, 2021

Dear Sherman School Community,

I hope that this letter finds you and your families safe, healthy, and ready to celebrate the coming of a new year. Although there are still a number of unknowns regarding COVID's impact on teaching and learning, my goal in this writing is to share a few important notes regarding how we plan to *remain open*, *mitigate* the spread of COVID, and *adjust* as new information and response strategies become clearer.

REMAINING OPEN

Despite the rates of [COVID positivity](#) being the highest they have ever been (approximately 18% statewide) since the pandemic began in March 2020, our foremost goal is to **remain open for full-time, in-person learning**. In fact, our goal of remaining open guides most (if not all) of the decisions we make, as well as the cooperation that we seek from families in our community.

In order to succeed at this primary goal, we need all students, staff, and families to continue their commitment by following the revised mitigation strategies that we describe below. We realize that not everyone will agree with every decision, but we ask that you trust that these strategies have been developed thoughtfully, in consultation with our medical team, and with the absolute best of intentions.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The tables below represent what we believe to be the most appropriate strategies for the safe return of students and staff to school beginning on Monday, January 3, 2022:

New Strategies	Beginning on January 3, 2022
Quarantine for Faculty and Staff	The CDC recently released updated guidance regarding shortening the isolation and quarantine period from 10 to 5 days. Although the guidance did not specify the application of this guidance to schools, in consultation with our health team, we have determined that all faculty and staff will be able to return to school in accordance with this new, shorter, recommendation. We believe this is appropriate and essential to ensure that we have the staffing necessary to remain open full-time.
Masks	Although not required at this time, our health team has recommended that staff and students wear surgical, N-95 or KN-95 masks as they have been determined to be more effective than gaiters and cloth masks. An additional announcement from the Governor's office has indicated that communities and schools will be provided with masks. We will share any relevant details as they become available.

Athletics	CIAC Guidance was updated on 12/22/21 and now requires all athletes participating in basketball and cheerleading to wear masks at all times regardless of vaccination status.
Spectators at Athletic Events	Parents and guardians may attend athletic events in our gymnasium under the following conditions: (1) visitors must be healthy, (2) visitors must wear a mask at all times, (3) visitors must space themselves as far apart from other spectators as possible. We are currently working on plans to live-stream on our <i>KNIGHT WATCH</i> channel... stay tuned for more details!
Pediatric Clinic in Sherman	Most experts agree that the most effective strategy to prevent the spread of COVID is to be vaccinated. In an effort to simplify this process for families, The Sherman School will host free clinics on January 26th and February 16th from 3:30 - 7:00 PM. More details will follow.

Ongoing Strategies	Continuing on January 3, 2022
Close Contact: Unvaccinated Students	<p>OPTION #1</p> <p>Quarantine at home for 10 days from the last day of exposure and return to school on day 11. If you choose this option, a PCR test is recommended on day 5 or later, but is not mandatory to return.</p> <p>OPTION #2</p> <p>Quarantine at home for 7 days and get a PCR test on day 5 or later. If negative and symptom free, your child may return to school on day 8 as long as you can provide Nurse Lorraine Spinetti with negative PCR test results.</p>
Close Contact: Vaccinated Students	No quarantine is required unless symptoms develop. Fully vaccinated individuals are recommended to be tested 5-7 days after their last exposure, even if they remain asymptomatic. They must also wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following the last exposure or until their test result is negative. Nurse Spinetti must have your child's proof of vaccination on file in order for him/her to return to school.
Positive for COVID-19	If your child tests positive, please notify the school as soon as possible by emailing covid@shermanschool.com . Nurse Spinetti will be in touch regarding next steps. She can also be reached by phone during normal school hours by calling (860) 355-3793 extension 335.
Board of Education Meetings	At this time, the Board will continue to hold its meeting virtually.
Lunch, Recess, XP and Enrichment, Specials, After School Activities, and Clubs	Our present mitigation strategies are considered to be effective and we plan to continue without changes at this time.

ADJUSTING

Please know that we are carefully monitoring the information that we receive from the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health. I participate in weekly calls with the Commissioner of Education, health directors, and epidemiologists to discuss the change in data that may result in adjustments to our strategies at the school level. I am also in constant contact with my superintendent colleagues in our area to exchange ideas and information that may impact the many staff members and students that we share.

While it may be frustrating, please understand that we need to remain flexible and adjust to new information as it becomes available. If you have any feedback, or if you have questions about these strategies, please feel free to contact me at (860) 355-3793.

Happy New Year!

Sincerely,



Jeff Melendez
Superintendent-Principal
melendezj@shermanschool.com