

FARMINGTON RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Otis & Sandisfield

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Re.: Updated guidance from DESE and DPH

Dear Farmington River Parents/Guardians,

As we navigate through this pandemic, we are committed to take all steps necessary to help keep our community safe and healthy. Part of the steps to stop the spread of COVID 19 requires staying abreast of every update and change that are issued from The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). With that being said, DESE and DPH have updated their definition of a close contact, quarantine guidelines, and testing protocols.

DEFINITION: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education list the following as their definition of close contact:

Close contacts are identified as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while **indoors**, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period.

Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated. Additionally, multiple brief or transitory interactions, such as in a hallway or when entering or exiting a classroom, are unlikely to result in 15 minutes and do not meet the definition of close contact. The definition of a close contact also specifies time spent indoors only.

Interactions that occur outdoors, whether masked or unmasked, do not count toward the definition of a close contact for the purposes of this document.

EXEMPTIONS: Exemptions to close contact quarantine and testing protocols:

Classroom close contacts: An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced **at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols**

Bus close contacts: Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses **when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.**

Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days: An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:

The exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness **AND**
The exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

If it is not known that an individual meets the CLOSE CONTACT definition, DESE and DPH state they should **NOT** be identified as a close contact. (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/close-contact-reminders.pdf>)

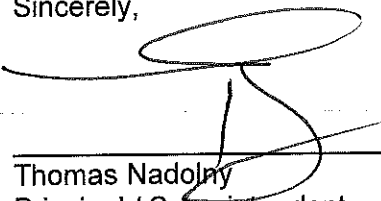
Guidance from DESE and DPH state if a student tests positive, it is **rare that the entire classroom** will be identified as a close contact, as most students will not have been within 3 feet of the individual for more than 15 minutes, while masked, or within 6 feet of the individual for more than 15 minutes, while unmasked. In practice, it is likely only the individuals sitting immediately next to the student who will be identified as close contacts.

Similarly, if a teacher is confirmed to have COVID-19, it is likely that only a few students, were close enough to that individual to be a close contact who needs to follow quarantine and testing protocols. If a teacher confirmed to have COVID-19 worked one-on-one with a student for more than 15 minutes, the student may need to quarantine or be tested, but a teacher stopping by student desks throughout a lesson is unlikely to result in any true close contacts given the brief nature of each interaction

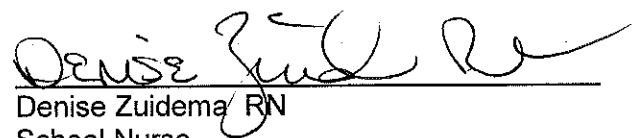
We understand how the evolving guidance from DESE and DPH can be challenging for our Farmington River Community. Please understand every step will be taken to keep our community informed of the changes as they are reported.

We are extremely grateful to our committed families and staff who continue to show great flexibility and resilience as we work together to contain the spread of this virus. If you have questions regarding the COVID-19 Guidelines, please give us a call.

Sincerely,



Thomas Nadolny
Principal / Superintendent
Farmington River Regional School



Denise Zuidema RN
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