



October 4, 2021

Dear Students, Parents, and Community Members,

I want to update you on our district’s plan for handling the instruction of students who are in isolation or quarantine. With over 300 quarantines since the start of the school year, the unfortunate reality is that our district has been hit hard from the outset. We acknowledge that quarantine and isolation can be disruptive and inconvenient for students and families alike. As a reminder, quarantine and isolation occur based on directives from the Broome and Tioga County Departments of Health. Their purpose is to keep students and staff healthy and safe by minimizing the spread of COVID-19.

Over the summer, our district brought together a variety of stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and parent representatives, to serve on a “Back-to-School” committee and on “Operations” and “Instruction” subcommittees. Each met several times and helped us draft back-to-school plans.

While these plans included provisions for handling the instruction of quarantined students, the sheer number of the quarantines has slowed our response and taxed our human resources, requiring us to adjust from the outset. I thank parents and community members for their patience and recognize that the delay has been frustrating for many.

For the next month, we will pilot the plan described below. We will re-evaluate the plan at the end of October and make any needed adjustments at that time.

Plan for Quarantine Instruction

While our goal is to remain fully in-person for the duration of the school year, we recognize that, at times, some students and staff will have to isolate and/or quarantine. Consequently, we will see the following possible scenarios for this school year:

Fully In-Person Learning

The district began the year with fully in-person learning. As you know, we will *not* offer a broadly available option for remote learning. We define fully in-person learning as an instance in which no student is quarantined. In this scenario, instruction will proceed as it would in a typical school year, except that it will be adapted to conform to all relevant health and safety guidelines.

Partial Class Quarantine

Typically, a partial class quarantine will occur when less than 50% of a given class is quarantined. In this scenario, instruction will be designed and delivered as fully in-person instruction. Quarantined students will *not* participate in class through video conferencing as they did last year. Our district came to this decision after extensive deliberation. Last year, providing concurrent instruction to remote students limited a teacher’s ability to leave the camera frame to

provide assistance to in-person students. We found that concurrent instruction of in-person and remote students tends to result in more teacher-centered instruction. It makes it more difficult to provide the type of rich hands-on and cooperative learning that in-person students so desperately need.

In this scenario, we will support quarantined students in the following ways:

Elementary

- Asynchronous Work: Classroom teachers will provide quarantined students with asynchronous schoolwork as they would for any excused absence.
- Related Arts Choice Boards: The district has published an [Elementary Related Arts website](#) on which “choice boards” have been posted with assignments for elementary Art, Physical Education, Library, and Music. We will continue to update this site with new activities throughout the year. The site can be accessed at the following address: bitly.ws/gNxB
- Remote Lessons for Elementary: At the elementary level, quarantined students will typically receive two forty-five-minute lessons each week. One will focus on English Language Arts. The other on Math. Sessions will be held Monday through Thursday from 4:00 to 4:45 p.m.

Secondary

- Asynchronous Work: Teachers will provide quarantined students with asynchronous schoolwork as they would for any excused absence. As in any year, quarantined students at the secondary level may reach out to their teachers for extra help during their teacher’s student assistance period.
- Student Assistance Periods: Secondary teachers have one period of the day dedicated to student assistance. Like in-person students, quarantined students may access this period by reaching out to their teachers and making an appointment. Students should come with specific questions about their asynchronous work. *Please understand that teachers must balance the needs of all their students during this period, so they may not be available to all students every day.*
- Additional Tutorial Support: Our goal is to ensure that quarantined students have access to additional tutorial support at least twice a week from a teacher in the following subject areas: English, social studies, math, science and special education. We will provide tutoring through video conferencing. Once again, students should come to this period with specific questions from their asynchronous work.
 - Middle School: During periods with low-to-moderate quarantines, this tutorial support will occur during the regular school day. If quarantines are particularly high, some of this support may be shifted to after school.
 - High School: At the high school level, tutorial support will be provided after school, typically between 3:15 and 4:00 p.m.

General

- We will put tutorial supports in place as fast as possible. This is a major undertaking as the number of quarantined students is very large.

- When we are notified of a positive COVID case, contact-tracing becomes our first priority. Therefore, it will typically take at least 48 hours for us to pull together asynchronous work and set up tutorial supports for a given student. We ask for parents' continued patience throughout this process.
- We have surveyed our teachers, and we believe that we have the capacity to offer the tutorial services as outlined above. However, after-school services are subject to faculty availability as they occur outside of the regular workday.

Class-wide Pivot to Remote Learning

A class-wide pivot to remote learning will occur at the direction of the Superintendent of Schools. Typically, it will occur when 50% or more of the students in a given class are quarantined. In this scenario, instruction will be designed and delivered as remote instruction. Non-quarantined students will still report to class as usual, however they will engage in the lesson through their school-issued device.

- Elementary: At the elementary level, students will have synchronous Morning Meeting, English Language Arts, and Math lessons delivered through video conferencing. Science and/or social studies instruction will be provided asynchronously through either Seesaw (K-2) or Google Classroom (3-5). In this scenario, in-person students will continue to attend their related arts (i.e., art, library, music, and physical education) classes. Quarantined students will access asynchronous lessons through online choice boards that are currently under development.
- Secondary: At the secondary level, with the exception of physical education, students will engage in all of their classes via synchronous video conferencing and Google Classroom. Physical education teachers will continue to teach in-person students. In Physical Education, quarantined students will receive an asynchronous make-up assignment.

School-wide or District-wide Pivot to Remote Learning

While it is the district's goal to remain fully in person for the duration of the school year, we must nonetheless plan for the possibility of a school-wide or district-wide pivot to remote learning. Such a shift would occur at the direction of the Superintendent of Schools. In this scenario, instruction would take the form described above for a class-wide pivot to remote learning. However, because no student would attend in person in this scenario, all elementary related arts classes (i.e., art, library, music, and physical education) and all secondary physical education classes would provide synchronous instruction through video conferencing.

As we start the new school year, I would like to wish all of you the best. As always, it is our goal to provide Vestal students with the highest quality schooling within the current health and safety guidelines.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Clarke III

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction