



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



December 29, 2021

Dear Superintendents:

As we close out 2021, your Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) wants to thank you for your efforts and commitment to maintaining in-school learning for the 2021-22 school year. It is likely that you are hearing rumors that schools may not reopen after the holiday break due to a rise in reported cases. Be assured that the team here at the CSDE and the entire Lamont Administration remain committed to safely reopening Connecticut schools for in-person learning by continuing to deploy a comprehensive set of strategies.

Cross-agency efforts continue to be aimed at getting and keeping our students in person, where we all agree they learn best and have access to a continuum of social-emotional and mental health supports, nutritious meals, physical activity and more, as our aligned commitment to prioritizing these needs has gained new prominence during the pandemic. As we move into the new year, and as our schools reopen after the holidays, CSDE encourages school districts to continue to partner with us and implement strategies to **Vaccinate, Test, and Mitigate**.

- 1. Vaccinate:** [Vaccination](#) remains the most important strategy to keeping kids in school by mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and limiting the severity of symptoms of the disease.
- 2. Test:** Testing remains one of the top measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and identify positive cases.
 - The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), along with the CSDE offer **free** weekly COVID-19 screening testing to all PK-12 public and private schools that have opted into the [Project COVID DeteCT](#) testing program.
 - DPH [has acquired iHealth COVID 19 rapid self-test kits and N-95 masks for Connecticut's K-12 schools](#). CSDE is working closely with our partner agencies on the process for distribution to public and private K-12 schools beginning in early January.
- 3. Mitigate:** Our schools and districts have demonstrated a significant level of success in mitigating the spread of this virus, and they have a degree of experience from the previous school year on how to [implement mitigation strategies](#). We appreciate continued reminders to the entire school community to do their part to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - Stay at home when you feel sick or have a fever, runny nose, or shortness of breath
 - Continue to wear and enforce the use of face coverings
 - Maintain social distancing when indoors
 - Wash hands frequently and have hand sanitizer easily available

In closing, I would like to thank you for all your efforts in 2021 as we continue to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. I remain in awe of your steadfast leadership, and I am thankful for our best-in-class collaboration, which continues to grow and fortify.

On behalf of the staff at the CSDE, thank you for your partnership and your dedication to our students, school staff, and families. I look forward to all we will accomplish together in 2022.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russell Tucker", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charlene M. Russell-Tucker
Commissioner of Education