



The Village School of North Bennington
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Dear Families:

This has no doubt been a challenging school year. I understand how difficult it is when students need to do distance learning for a week, or more, as part of their quarantine or due to a COVID-19 classroom exposure. Speaking for myself and on behalf of the faculty and staff, I can say how hard this has been for us, too. We want nothing more than to have your students in school as much as possible for in-person learning.

I am pleased to announce that, in the new year, we hope to be able to change our COVID-19 procedure from having to shut down a classroom when there is a COVID-19 exposure in school to instead making it possible for students to safely remain in school for in-person learning. The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11 and the availability of the state-wide “Test to Stay” program will make this possible **IF WE HAVE AT LEAST 50% OF STUDENTS in a grade who are *either* fully vaccinated or whose parent/guardian provides consent for their unvaccinated student(s) to participate in “Test to Stay.”**

The more students who get vaccinated, the safer we can keep our school. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states: “Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.” **If your student is vaccinated, or when you get your student vaccinated, please fill out the vaccination attestation form available at www.vsnb.org/forms and send us proof of their vaccination.**

If your student is NOT vaccinated, we strongly encourage you to consider giving consent for your student to participate in the Test to Stay program as soon as possible. Provided that we have supplies on hand and sufficient student participation, our school expects to be able to offer this option for unvaccinated, asymptomatic students to be able to stay in school when they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 while they were in school. Test to Stay works by giving unvaccinated students in Pre-K through Sixth Grade the possibility of taking a rapid antigen test at school each morning for up to 7 days after their initial COVID-19 exposure to determine whether it is safe for them to remain in school each day. The test is free and involves a quick nasal swab, and results are ready within 15 minutes. *More Test to Stay details and a link for the consent form are on the informational sheet below.*

Please be advised that if there is a COVID-19 exposure in your student’s class and your student(s) is not vaccinated and not enrolled in the Test to Stay program, then your student will need to quarantine and will not be able to attend school in person (distance learning packets would be provided in such cases).

Importantly, our school will continue to follow a stringent stay-home-when-sick policy for students and staff. Nothing provides 100% protection from COVID-19 short of complete isolation, but we hope that taking these steps will help us strike a balance of fulfilling our mission as an educational institution and serving students and families well, while also keeping everyone safer.

We understand that families are facing important considerations when deciding what is best for their child(ren). The school nurse, Kaitlyn Hewson, and I are available to answer your questions. **Thank you for considering vaccinating your student(s) or signing up your student(s) for the Test to Stay program as soon as possible.** With everyone’s support, we hope to have as much in-person instructional time in the new year as possible.

Warm regards,

Tim Newbold
Head of School

Test to Stay Program

Starting in January 2022, the Village School is hoping to make the “Test to Stay” Program available for UNVACCINATED students of all ages, including Pre-K students, as explained in a school-wide letter dated 12/17/21. Our ability to do this will be dependent upon both supplies and sufficient student participation.

The goals of “Test to Stay” are to allow students and staff to participate in in-person learning as safely as possible while lessening the burden of quarantine and multiple class and/or schoolwide closures on students and their families, as well as teachers.



A parent or guardian must sign the Test to Stay Consent Form in order for unvaccinated students under the age of 18 to be able to participate. Completing the consent form for each student takes only a few minutes.

The Consent Form is available at this link:

<https://www.cognitoforms.com/VermontAgencyOfEducation/SY22COVID19TestingProgramIndependentSchoolConsentForm>.

The consent form provides detailed information on the intent of the Test to Stay program and how it works. You can also learn more about the Test to Stay program on the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) website: <https://education.vermont.gov/covid19/testing-test-to-stay>. The Test to Stay program is *free* for students.

If your student participates in Test to Stay and is identified as a close contact of a person who tests positive for COVID-19 while at school, your student will be able to take a daily rapid antigen test at the beginning of each school day until the 7th day of exposure. As long as your student has no symptoms and tests negative, your student will be able to stay in school. The rapid antigen test result is received within 15 minutes of your student doing a nasal swab. *Your student will still need to quarantine outside of school.*

The Vermont Agency of Education, the Department of Health, and a range of other state government and public health partners, are making Test to Stay possible for schools throughout the state. Using a combination of PCR and rapid antigen tests, response testing will allow our school to greatly reduce the time students might otherwise have to spend out of the classroom due to cases at school.

If you have any questions about the Test to Stay Program or need assistance with filling out the Consent Form, please contact the school at 802-442-5955 or info@vsnb.org.