

SCHOOL MESSENGER (ROBO CALL) COMMUNICATIONS
2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

January 11, 2022

Dear Groton Community,

Throughout the pandemic schools have been asked to make changes to protocols and procedures with little to no advance notice. This morning, we received updated guidance from the Tompkins County Department of Health regarding new procedures for the tracing of close contacts of COVID-19 positive individuals. As I stated in my last communication with you on January 9th, when these efforts were first undertaken, school personnel would notify close contacts to quarantine at home and seek a COVID-19 test while they awaited communication from a county case investigator. *Under the new guidance from the health department, the expectation is for COVID-19 positive individuals to self-report the exposure to their close contacts.* This morning's meeting further clarified for school officials the shift the TCDOH is making from agency contact tracing to self-responsibility as it relates to COVID-19.

What has changed:

- The county will no longer have responsibility for contact tracing EXCEPT for positive cases from a PCR test. Further, the DOH has stated they will be prioritizing those PCR case investigations that involve people under the age of 18 or the elderly. Isolation and quarantine notices will focus on households, as that is where data has shown the highest transmission of the virus to be occurring. **Isolation and quarantine orders from the DOH will be FIVE days in length, as long as symptoms are improving.** As has been the case in the past, vaccinated individuals who are close contacts will NOT be required to quarantine.
- The school will do their best to gather information on close contacts and notify them but cannot issue a quarantine notice. Instead, we will be encouraging close contacts to watch for symptoms and to stay home should they develop. **Families are encouraged to take personal responsibility for notifying close contacts of the positive case so that they may be watching for symptoms within their own households.**
- Individuals who test positive using a rapid at-home test (student or adult) should quarantine for FIVE days. **If symptoms have improved after 5 days (no fever for 24 hours, no runny nose, no phlegm in cough) individuals may return to school/work, and resume all normal activities.** Proper use of a mask upon return to work/school is emphasized, especially for the first five days of return. *This means students **WILL** be able to participate in extracurricular activities once they are well enough to be back in school.*
- If you are considered a close contact, follow the recommendations of what to do next, which can be found here:

<https://tompkinscountyny.gov/health/factsheets/coronavirusfaq#qtandiso>

Note: If you test positive on either a PCR test or a home test, notify your student's building main office and go to the link above to find directions on your next steps.

What has not changed:

- Expectations that anyone who comes to our campus (adult or student) will notify us of a positive COVID-19 test result.

- Individuals should still stay home if they are symptomatic and seek testing.
- Symptomatic students will still be sent to the nurse and then home with a rapid COVID test kit.
- Notifications of a positive result on a COVID-19 **PCR** test will come from the county health department. The county health department will conduct positive case investigations based on the priorities mentioned in preceding paragraphs of this letter.

Our process:

- We will be doing our best to continue to notify you **via email** when we are made aware if you and/or your student was identified by someone who tested positive via an at-home rapid COVID test based upon an in-school event. We ask that you recognize that given the rising number of positive cases, we may not always hear about a case until the five day quarantine period has passed and, therefore, you may not receive any notice of having been a close contact.
- You will be responsible to monitor yourself and/or your student for symptoms.
- Should symptoms occur, you should stay home, isolate, and seek a COVID-19 test as soon as you are able to do so.
- **The District has rapid home COVID tests available should your student be identified as a close contact and you wish to test them at home. Please contact the building principal to have access to a test. We can send them home with your student, or you can pick up a test kit in the main office that your student attends.**

The District has placed an updated FAQ document on the website for you to access, should you want further clarification on the new guidelines.

PLEASE BE AWARE that it is highly unlikely that this is the final change that will be made in these procedures. But, be assured that we will continue to notify you of changes as soon as we are able.

Sincerely,
Margo Martin
Superintendent
Groton CSD

OLD MESSAGES

October 7, 2021

Good morning. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. Last evening, the Tompkins County Department of Health reported that a Groton student tested positive for COVID. This student does not attend programming on our campus, but does come into the Jr-Sr High building to wait for a bus. However, given the fact the student has not been in school since September 24th, the DOH advised us we did not have any need for contact tracing.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,

Margo Martin
Superintendent

October 5, 2021

Good morning. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. A short while ago we received confirmation from the Tompkins County Department of Health that a student at the Groton elementary building tested positive for COVID. The last day the student was in the building was on Friday, October 1st. We anticipate the County Health Department will be completing the contact tracing investigation and will be notifying all individuals who were close contacts in the very near future. As a preemptive measure, we have contacted all families involved to make them aware that their child was a close contact of the positive case.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,

Margo Martin
Superintendent

October 2, 2021

Good afternoon. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. A short while ago we received confirmation from the Tompkins County Department of Health that three students at the Groton Jr-Sr High building tested positive for COVID. The last day for the first student was September 24th. For the second two, who are a family unit, the last day of attendance was September 27th. We anticipate the County Health Department will be completing the contact tracing investigation and will be notifying all individuals who were close contacts in the very near future. As a preemptive measure, we have contacted all families involved to make them aware that their child was a close contact of the positive cases.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,

Margo Martin
Superintendent

October 1, 2021

Good morning. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. A short while ago we received confirmation from the Tompkins County Department of Health that a student at the Groton Jr-Sr High building tested positive for COVID. The last day that student was in the building was on September 27, 2021. We anticipate the County Health Department will be completing the contact tracing investigation and will be notifying all individuals who were close contacts in the very near future. As a preemptive measure, we have contacted all families involved to make them aware that their child was a close contact of the positive case.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,
Margo Martin
Superintendent

September 22, 2021

Good evening. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. A short while ago we received confirmation that a student at the Groton Jr-Sr High building tested positive for COVID. The last day that student was in the building was on Monday, September 20th. We anticipate the County Health Department will be completing the contact tracing investigation and will be notifying all individuals who were close contacts in the very near future. As a preemptive measure, we have contacted all families involved to make them aware that their child was a close contact of the positive case.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,
Margo Martin
Superintendent

September 15, 2021

Good evening. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. A short while ago we received confirmation from the Tompkins County Department of Health that a student at the Groton elementary building tested positive for COVID. The last day that student was in the building was on Friday, September 10th. We anticipate the County Health Department will be completing the contact tracing investigation and will be notifying all individuals who were close contacts in the very near future. As a preemptive measure, we have contacted all families involved to make them aware that their child was a close contact of the positive case.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,

Margo Martin
Superintendent

September 13, 2021

Good afternoon. This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District. A short while ago we received confirmation from the Tompkins County Department of Health that a student at the Groton Jr-Sr High building tested positive for COVID. The last day that student was in the building was on Thursday, September 9th. We anticipate the County Health Department will be completing the contact tracing investigation and will be notifying all individuals who were close contacts in the very near future. As a preemptive measure, we have contacted all families involved to make them aware that their child was a close contact of the positive case.

I want to assure our school community that we are taking all necessary steps to protect staff and students and communicate closely with the Health Department. We continue to urge everyone to wear your mask when social distancing cannot be maintained, and wash your hands well and often.

If you have any additional concerns, please contact your building level principal, or myself, by calling the district office. We will continue to monitor this situation and provide any necessary updates, as the health, safety and well-being of our entire school community continues to be of top priority to us.

Sincerely,

Margo Martin
Superintendent

September 7, 2021

Good afternoon! This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District, with important information regarding the first day of school, scheduled for September 8, 2021. Just a reminder that face coverings will be required indoors throughout the instructional day. As such, we ask you send your child to school prepared to wear face coverings throughout the day, except when outdoors for PE or recess, eating, singing, or playing a wind instrument. The school will provide masks for anyone who is in need of one. Students riding the bus will also need face coverings - Our drivers will have extras available should your child be in need.

I also wanted to remind all families that we need a completed Health Screening Acknowledgement form for each of your students. As I mentioned in my call last week, the district will not be collecting daily attestation forms from families for the 2021-2022 school year. Instead, we will be requiring every faculty, staff and family to sign a one-time Health Screening Acknowledgement form for EACH child whereby they commit to completing a health screening daily before coming to school. The actual screening to be completed includes the following questions, and should be answered **every day** for each child in the household: (NOTE: It does NOT have to be submitted electronically to the school.)

- a) Does my child have a temperature of greater than 100.4 degrees fahrenheit?
- b) Has my child been a close contact to anyone who has tested positive for COVID in the past 10 days?
- c) Is my child displaying any COVID-related symptoms (runny nose, cough, fever, headache, sore throat, nausea)?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, please see below for determining whether your child should attend school for that day:

- Students with a fever need to refrain from attending school until they are symptom free for 24 hours.
- Students displaying COVID-related symptoms should be tested before returning to school.
- Students who have been in close contact with a positive COVID case **and are vaccinated** may attend school unless they begin to develop symptoms.
- Students who are **not vaccinated** and have been in close contact with a positive COVID case will need to be cleared through the Department of Health's contact tracing before they can return to school.

Please click on the link below and complete a Health Screening Acknowledgment form for EACH of your child(ren) and submit them via the Google form prior to the first day of school (September 8, 2021). You can also get a paper copy of the Acknowledgment form by contacting the main office of the building your child attends.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact your child's building principal. I look forward to seeing your students tomorrow!

[Health Screening Acknowledgment Link](#)

August 30, 2021

Good afternoon! This is a message from Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District, with important information regarding the first day of school, scheduled for September 8, 2021. Last week, Governor Hochul mandated face coverings be worn at all times within the UPK-12 school setting (indoors). As was the case last year, we ask you send your child to school prepared to wear face coverings throughout the day, except when outdoors for PE or recess, eating, singing, or playing a wind instrument. The school will provide masks for anyone who is in need of one.

In compliance with Department of Health guidelines, the district will not be collecting daily attestation forms from families for the 2021-2022 school year. Instead, we will be requiring every faculty, staff and family to sign a one-time Health Screening Acknowledgement form for EACH child whereby they commit to completing a health screening daily before coming to school. The actual screening to be completed includes the following questions, and should be answered **every day** for each child in the household: (NOTE: It does NOT have to be submitted electronically to the school.)

- a) Does my child have a temperature of greater than 100.4 degrees fahrenheit?
- b) Has my child been a close contact to anyone who has tested positive for COVID in the past 10 days?
- c) Is my child displaying any COVID-related symptoms (runny nose, cough, fever, headache, sore throat, nausea)?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, please see below for determining whether your child should attend school for that day:

- Students with a fever need to refrain from attending school until they are symptom free for 24 hours.
- Students displaying COVID-related symptoms should be tested before returning to school.
- Students who have been in close contact with a positive COVID case **and are vaccinated** may attend school unless they begin to develop symptoms.
- Students who are **not vaccinated** and have been in close contact with a positive COVID case will need to be cleared through the Department of Health's contact tracing before they can return to school.

Please click on the link below and complete a Health Screening Acknowledgment form for EACH of your child(ren) and submit them via the Google form prior to the first day of school (September 8, 2021). You can also get a paper copy of the Acknowledgment form by contacting the main office of the building your child attends.

Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact your child's building principal. I look forward to seeing your students next week!

[Health Screening Acknowledgment Link](#)

August 2nd, 2021

Good afternoon! This is Margo Martin, Superintendent of the Groton Central School District with a message regarding the start of school in September. Although this is not how I envisioned beginning the 2021-2022 school year, I believe I need to share reopening “guidance” from NYSED and the Department of Health (DOH) as I understand it to date.

First and foremost, may I express the excitement we are feeling here at Groton in preparing for full day, in-person instruction for *all* of our students come the first day of school, scheduled for **Wednesday, September 8, 2021**. We will be back on our traditional school schedules that were in place prior to COVID; the Jr-Sr High will have an instructional day of 8:00am - 2:45pm and GES will run from 8:40am - 3:08pm. Postcards were mailed out to all residents about two weeks ago asking for family intent to utilize school transportation, as well as provide updated pick-up and drop-off locations. If you have not done so already, please return those cards to your child’s respective building office as soon as possible. We will be sending out finalized bus runs with pick-up and drop-off times to all families the week of August 23rd.

Although we have yet to receive any formal reopening guidance from either the governor or the state DOH, we have been advised to start planning with present CDC guidelines in mind. As such, COVID protocols and requirements will be determined based upon each locality’s level of positivity rate at the time of reopening, but may very well include the following:

- Face coverings for all faculty, staff and students throughout the school day regardless of vaccination status when social distancing of 6’ cannot be maintained. Presently, there is no requirement to maintain social distancing within the classrooms and we anticipate being able to hold full classes in all content areas.
- Face coverings for all students using school transportation, although there will not be a limit on the number of students allowed per bus.
- Face coverings for any indoor after-school events, including sports, extracurricular clubs, etc. The CDC calls for face coverings for athletes as tolerated by the athlete, given the nature of the event. Our IAC league may once again be implementing universal guidance for athletic contests, but I have yet to hear anything regarding this. **I do know that as of today, spectators will be allowed at all events, with an expectation of wearing face coverings if the event is indoors.** Outdoor events do NOT require face coverings as of this writing.
- Continuance of cleaning and disinfecting daily in school spaces.

Further, based upon the gaps that have evolved from remote learning, the Governor and NYSED have both expressed the expectation of having *all* students return to an in-person instructional model. As such, we do not have plans to offer a remote learning model this coming school year. Should the pandemic elevate to the point we are asked to shut down for a period of time, we will have a remote learning model contingency plan, but it will only be used if we are unable to provide in-person instruction. Parents who would like to continue to educate their students from home can do so by filing a home schooling plan through our TST-BOCES. If you are interested in pursuing this option for your child, and need assistance in who to contact to

initiate that process, you can reach out to Billie Downs, K-12 District Administrator, at 898-5301 or by emailing her at bdowns@grotoncs.org.

I understand that this communication may leave you with more questions than answers at this point... Be assured we are feeling similar frustrations with the lack of a concrete plan from our leaders in Albany. As soon as I have further information, I will be forwarding it on to all of you. Until then, please enjoy the rest of your summer vacation! We still have six weeks left to rejuvenate!