



December 15, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we near winter recess, we have a few items of information and reminders:

***Calendar Adjustment for Thursday, December 23***

The district is changing the school day on December 23, 2021, from a full day to a half day. The morning will be used as a time for students and staff to focus on wellness and spirit as we head into a much-needed winter recess.

We are currently experiencing a significant surge in COVID cases and direct contacts. The district would like to ensure that the winter recess is, as much as possible, outside of the required ten-day COVID direct contact and isolation window for students and staff. In doing so, it is our hope that attendance will be less affected by COVID exposures after the recess. I would have considered a full day; however, we don't know how many emergency closing days we will need to use this winter. Instituting a half day does not affect our allotted snow days and would not jeopardize our April break if winter weather causes too many school closings this year.

We recognize the strain and stress this pandemic has placed upon our students, staff, and families. Our hope is for students to have the morning of December 23 to enjoy time with friends and teachers and then get an early start to the winter recess in the afternoon.

**On Thursday, December 23:**

- **There will be no pre-kindergarten.**
- **Grades K-6 will be dismissed at 10:30 a.m.**
- **Grades 7-12 will be dismissed at 11:15 a.m.**

For grades K-6, if this changes your child's 'go home plans' for December 23, please send in a note to the main office on Tuesday or Wednesday.

***Masking on Buses***

This is a reminder that masking is required at all times on district buses and transportation vehicles. This is a state and federal requirement and there are no exceptions. Masking is an important tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19 on our buses as we are not always able to accommodate physical distancing.

We ask that everyone cooperate with this state and federal requirement. If students do not have a mask when entering a bus, they will be immediately provided one by the driver as they get on the bus. Failure to comply will result in loss of district transportation privileges for a period of time up to a semester. By state order, masks must be properly worn by students while on school buses, as well as any school buildings/facilities.

***Test to Stay Update***

We have updated the Test to Stay (TTS) strategy for those identified as direct contacts who are without symptoms and unvaccinated. The updates include information on direct contacts living in the same household as a person who has tested positive as well as use of district transportation. Read the full information on TTS here: <https://horseheadsdistrict.com/HCSDTTestToStayStrategy.cfm>

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### ***Vaccine Clinic***

All appointments for the Chemung County Health Department's COVID vaccine clinic Friday are full. For more information on other Health Department clinics, please visit their information page at <https://www.chemungcountyny.gov/covidinfo/index.php>. As a reminder, COVID vaccination is not required in our schools. The district is simply providing the county the use of our site to assist those in our community who wish to be vaccinated.

As we near the end of the 2021 calendar year, we want to thank everyone for their care for our students and our schools. Like 2020, this year has not been easy, and we hope that everyone can take some time to celebrate and rest during the winter recess. Together we will weather this pandemic, and I know you share our hope that the new calendar year will see the easing of pandemic restrictions and requirements, and a renewed sense of health and happiness for all.

*Wishing you all a joyful and safe holiday season.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Douglas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "D".

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas  
Superintendent of Schools