



THOMASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
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FRANCINE COSS, SUPERINTENDENT

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Last Friday, I wrote to bring you up to speed on what school will look like this year with the continued pandemic. **This message is an update to Friday's letter.**

The most current information related to the 2021-2022 school year is below:

- School Schedule/Calendar – No Change from Friday's Letter
- Masking in School – No Change from Friday's Letter
- **Ending of Attendance Flexibilities – Change per the Thomaston Board of Education:**
 - *Potential Issue 1 – No opt-out of in-person instruction – No change from Friday's Letter*
 - *Potential Issue 2 – Student Attendance – Change per Thomaston Board of Education:*
The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) attendance rules have not changed since Friday's letter; however, my review and analysis of Connecticut law, CSDE and Department of Public Health policies/rules revealed a connection between quarantining and homebound instruction (different from homeschooling). Connecticut law requires districts to provide instruction to students who are designated as homebound due to prolonged illness or quarantine. The connection between quarantining, homebound instruction and the legal obligation to provide instruction to homebound students is described in a formal resolution which was presented to and approved by the Thomaston Board of Education last night. This formal resolution allows quarantined students to be marked present each day they appropriately participate in district-provided homebound instruction during their quarantine period; if they do not appropriately participate in district-provided homebound instruction during their quarantine period, they will be marked absent. More information about this new option for quarantined students is found in the formal resolution which is included at the end of this letter.

I am grateful to the Thomaston Board of Education for their support of this formal resolution as it offers an opportunity for our quarantined students to continue their learning online and get attendance credit for participating online.

Sincerely,

Francine Coss
Superintendent of Schools



Thomaston Board of Education
RESOLUTION: Quarantined/Isolated Student Attendance

Respectfully submitted by Francine Coss, Superintendent of Schools

WHEREAS on May 15, 2013 the Connecticut Commissioner of Education issued the [“Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences” Memorandum](#) which:

- Defines a “family’s home being quarantined” as an emergency beyond the control of the family and further defines the absences caused by quarantine as “excused” absences; and
- Indicates that “missing an excessive number of school days, regardless of reason, can place a child at risk of falling behind his or her peers academically”; and
- Recommends, “[a]s with existing academic and social emotional supports, schools should structure their attendance policies and programs around Scientific Research Based Interventions” and lists “Online learning opportunities” as a Tier II targeted strategy.

WHEREAS in April 2017 the Connecticut State Department of Education published [“Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut’s Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts”](#) which indicates “Boards of education have the leadership responsibility for adopting school attendance policies and procedures” and schools to address attendance barriers;

WHEREAS the attendance flexibilities for remote learners described in the Connecticut State Department of Education [“Addendum 14 Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together - Supporting Student Attendance and Engagement during Hybrid or Remote Learning”](#) do not apply to the 2021-2022 school year;

WHEREAS on July 25, 2021 the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Connecticut Department of Public Health published [“Interim Recommendations for COVID-19 Prevention in Connecticut’s PreK-12 Schools - Fall 2021”](#) which continues COVID-19 contact tracing responsibilities for Connecticut public schools and indicates which circumstances result in at home quarantine or isolation of students;

WHEREAS the Connecticut State Department of Education [Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System](#):

- States "[a] student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day” and
- Defines “absent” for homebound students as “[s]tudents who are homebound due to illness or injury are reported as “absent” unless they are receiving instruction and/or tutoring from an appropriately certified teacher for a designated amount of time that the school or district deems adequate”;

WHEREAS all Thomaston Public Schools teachers are assigned to teach content of which they are appropriately certified to teach;

WHEREAS [Connecticut General Statute Sec. 10-16. Length of school year](#) states “Each school district shall provide in each school year no less than one hundred and eighty days of actual school sessions for grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, nine hundred hours of actual school work for full-day kindergarten and grades one to twelve, inclusive”;

WHEREAS Thomaston Public Schools in-person school year meets the requirements of [Connecticut General Statute Sec. 10-16](#);

WHEREAS on May 28, 2021 the Connecticut State Department of Education published “[AccelerateCT – Connecticut's Framework for Accelerating Educational Opportunity and Access](#)” which states, “Virtual learning means the provision of instruction by means of one or more internet-based software on a virtual platform or as part of an in person or remote learning”;

WHEREAS Thomaston Public Schools has provided in-person virtual learning for more than a decade and remote virtual learning since March 2020;

WHEREAS Thomaston Public Schools remote virtual learning is principally live synchronous and aligned to the in-person school year;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Thomaston Board of Education deems adequate remote, virtual learning provided in mostly live synchronous instruction by any Thomaston Public Schools teacher to any Thomaston Public Schools homebound student to ensure the homebound student is able to successfully return to the in-person classroom. **A homebound student who participates in live synchronous learning for more than half a school day shall be marked "present" (not absent).**

APPROVED