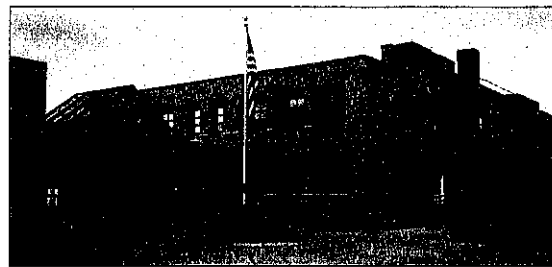


Minerva Central School

Timothy F. Farrell - *Superintendent*
Nancy O'Brien - *Business Manager*



October 14, 2020

Dear MCS Parents/Guardians,

We need to make families aware of the way the school is now required to handle student illness if any of the symptoms are included on the current COVID-19 list of symptoms.

Based on the new guidance provided by the New York State Department of Health, if a student is experiencing symptoms that could be associated with COVID-19, the student must be referred to their health care provider (HCP) to be evaluated. It will be up to your HCP to determine whether to administer a COVID-19 diagnostic test or to provide an alternate diagnosis. Please note: there are very specific requirements HCPs must use for alternate diagnosis. The decision as to when your child is able to return to school depends on what steps your HCP takes. Included with this letter is a flowchart from the New York State Department of Health that helps explain what steps must be taken and when your child can return to school.

The list of COVID-19 symptoms which are currently identified include: a temperature greater than or equal to 100 degrees fahrenheit, feel feverish or have chills, cough, loss of taste or smell, fatigue/feeling of tiredness, sore throat, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain or body aches, headaches, nasal congestion/runny nose.

There are two types of diagnostic tests currently performed for COVID-19. One is a rapid antigen test and the other is a PCR test. The rapid test produces results in about 30 minutes and the PCR usually takes three to four days. Many of our families use Hudson Headwaters Health Network so we know that they are using the rapid test. We do not know whether or not other HCPs in the area offer the rapid option but we encourage you to inquire.

If the rapid test results are negative, depending on your child's symptoms and other factors, your HCP may decide to administer a PCR test as well. In this case, your child's HCP may allow your child to return to school with the negative rapid test result or they may choose to hold them out until the PCR test results are available. We know how confusing this can be. We have experienced both scenarios in the last week or so - the student has been allowed to return with a negative COVID test (accompanied by

improved symptoms) or the student has not been allowed to return to school until the results of the PCR test confirms a negative result (and is accompanied by improved symptoms). In the end, it is really up to your health care provider's evaluation, which is why we are no longer able to simply dismiss the symptom as not related to COVID-19 and allow them to be in school.

We know how challenging this is for our families. We recognize how difficult taking your child to a health care provider and/or having a COVID diagnostic test performed when they are experiencing what may be somewhat "normal" symptoms of many common non-COVID illnesses. Unfortunately, we are in the middle of a pandemic and the potential for rapid transmission of the virus is of significant concern. These are far from "normal" times that we are operating a school and living our lives in. As a result, we are required to respond very differently when our students are sick.

One last thing, at least for now: the latest requirements issued by the New York State Department of Health also include specific time requirements for when a student must be seen by a HCP and, if recommended, the time allowed to get the results of the COVID test. In summary, if your child does not see a HCP within 48 hours of being referred by the school or the COVID test results (if recommended) are not available in 48 hours after the test is performed, the school is required to notify the local department of health (Essex or Warren County depending on where you live). We have made our department of health agencies aware of the fact that, depending on the student, their HCP and the type of COVID test used, these timelines may be unrealistic.

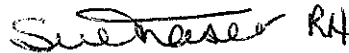
Thank you so much for continuing to be patient, understanding and supportive of our efforts in providing an in-person learning experience in the safest environment possible.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Timothy Farrell, Superintendent

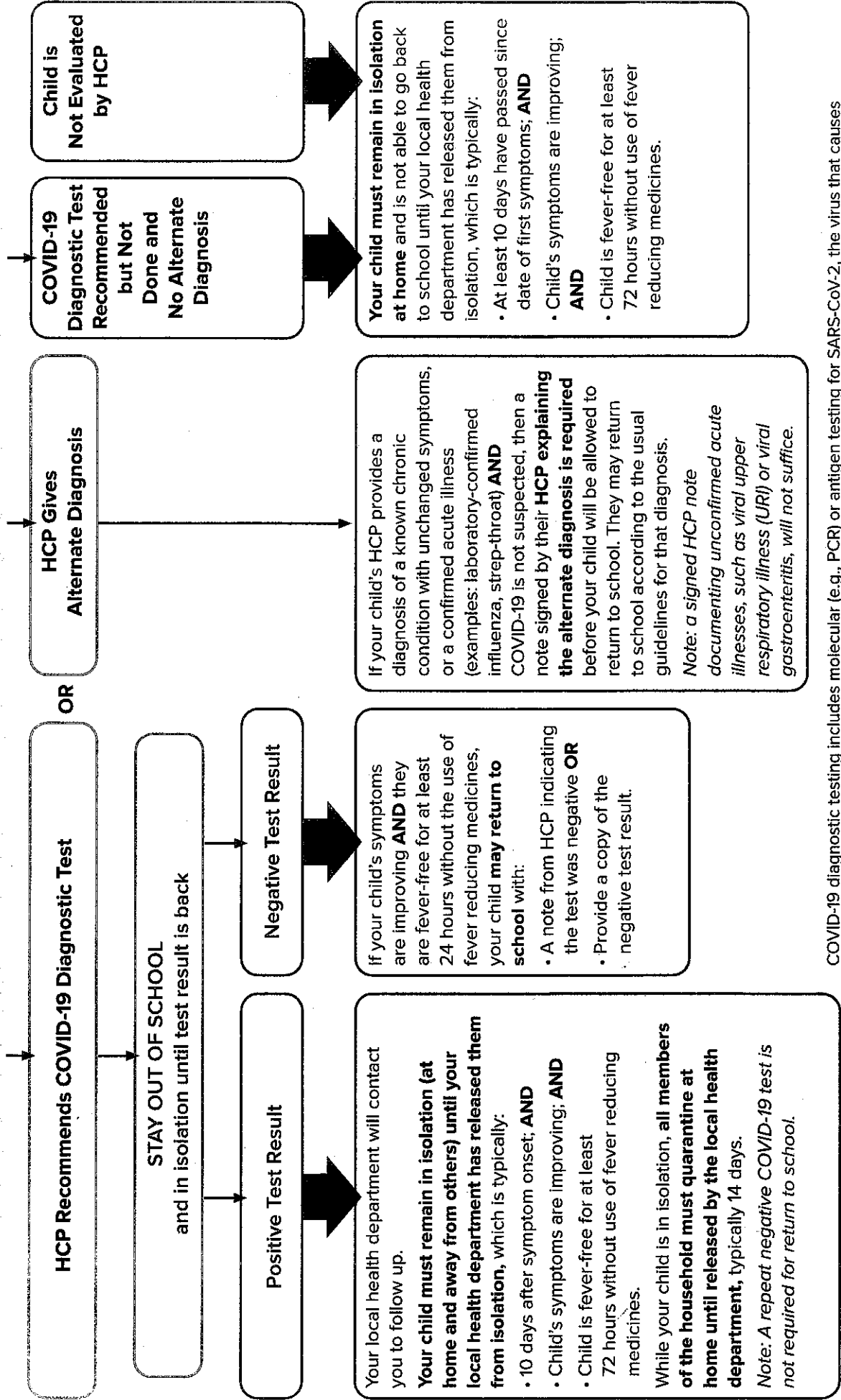


Sue Frasier, School Nurse/RN

Enc: Excerpt from NYSDOH COVID-19 School ToolKit

My child has COVID-19 symptoms. When can they go back to school?

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER (HCP) EVALUATION FOR COVID-19 (can be in-person or by video/telephone as determined by HCP)



COVID-19 diagnostic testing includes molecular (e.g., PCR) or antigen testing for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Diagnostic testing may be performed with a nasopharyngeal swab, nasal swab, or saliva sample, as ordered by the health care provider and per laboratory specifications. At times, a negative antigen test will need to be followed up with a confirmatory molecular test. Serology (antibody testing) cannot be used to rule in or out acute COVID-19.

