December 9, 2022

Dear Members of the New Haven Federation of Teachers,

I hope you have been able to find some rest during this long weekend. I recognize the anxiety many of us have as we prepare to return to school on Monday. The case numbers and the impacts on school staffing are unprecedented. If you are sick or quarantined, please take care and let us know if you need anything in the coming days and weeks. Here are some important updates:

- **Masks and Tests**: We have been reassured that a new shipment of N95s will be delivered to schools on Monday. In addition, schools have a supply of rapid tests so if any members of our school community have symptoms or a known COVID exposure, they can get a rapid test kit from their school. Please notify your building steward if you are having a hard time accessing masks or tests.

- **Virtual Meetings**: We have heard your concerns about in-person staff meetings while case rates are so high. As a result, central office has agreed to our request that all building level staff meetings and professional learning events be held virtually until further notice. These virtual meetings will help to minimize exposure for our educators.

- **Coverage Pay**: As many of you know, Dr. Tracey has offered to pay teachers who use their prep time to cover classes. According to a recent update:
  - Any teacher who is utilizing prep time to provide classroom coverage is eligible. The rate is $32/hour. We are to keep a track of the coverage dates and hours. The principals must know that this is being done and the principal will also document. The principal then turns in the part time payroll information, signed by the teacher, with the hours and dates worked. This is similar to teachers working after school and keeping time sheets. Some schools already give teachers a double prep and use them to cover a class, so our class coverage during that time would not count.

- **January CIA Meeting**: Please remember that this month’s January CIA meetings (1/10 and 1/24) will be rescheduled.

- **AFT-CT Updates**: We are working closely with AFT-CT to speak out about our shared concerns and demand the necessary resources to keep our schools safe. Here are a few important updates:
  - Please complete [this brief, anonymous job title-specific poll](#) "taking the temperature" of conditions this past week. **It is important that you complete this poll by Monday, January 10.** (Click [here](#) for link to poll).
o **Enough is Enough - Time to Make Our Schools Safe! Wear Black on Wednesday!**

The BOE Coalition, which is made up of our 60,000 fellow union members in school districts across the state, is wearing black to school this Wednesday, January 12th to bring much needed attention to the dire situation in our schools. Since coming back from the holiday break to the rampant spread of COVID in our schools, AFT-CT has been speaking out about our shared concerns - the lack of N95 masks and home testing kits, and staff shortages, putting us and our students at risk. We all deserve better. **AFT-CT has been calling for the implementation of 9 updated core principles** which we believe will keep our schools open and safe. Now we need every member of the school community to join together and amplify our voice. [Click here to see AFT-CT’s flyer for this action.]

| WHO: Teachers, Paraeducators, School Nurses, Custodians, Support Staff, Bus Drivers and Monitors |
| WHAT: Will wear black to work and take pictures with your colleagues to share on social media with the hashtag #Blackout4SafeSchools |
| WHEN: Wednesday, January 12th |
| WHY: To bring attention to legislators, school administrators, and the media that our schools are not safe enough and that more must be done to protect the health of students and staff. |

I recognize that some of us believe we need to take additional steps to ensure our schools are safe. We see our fellow **union members in cities like Chicago organizing** and we want to advocate for health and safety in our workplaces as well. The #Blackout4SafeSchools Action on Wednesday is one of many ways we can raise awareness and demonstrate our collective strength. By wearing black on Wednesday, taking pictures and sharing our stories on social media, we can bring attention to these issues and clearly communicate that more must be done to protect the health of staff and students. Actions like these demonstrate our unity, engagement, and solidarity with educators across the city and state. And please know that we will build off these actions and continue to fight. **We still need to communicate to the Governor, Commissioner, and our state legislators.** If you have already sent your letter and called these decision makers about the need for remote learning to count for the 180 day requirement, please encourage at least one of your colleagues to do the same.

Thank you again for engaging with the important work of our union by reading these updates. [You can subscribe to our website and receive this information as soon as it is posted.](#) And of course your building steward will email you with updates as well. We know union members have additional concerns on issues like the use of quarantine/sick days and Google Classroom. We are working on getting clear and fair answers and we will update you soon.

In solidarity,

Leslie Blatteau
President, New Haven Federation of Teachers