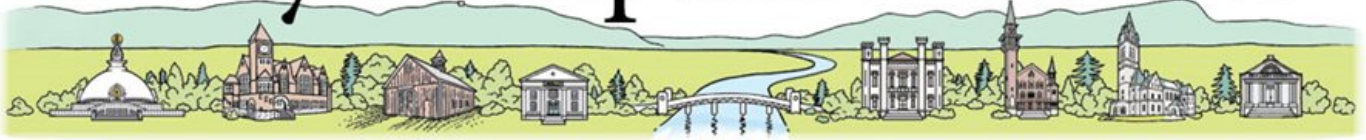


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## No virus cases: Williston Northampton School credits vigilance, masks



A teacher and two students eat at an outdoor table with plexiglass partitions at Williston Northampton School recently. SUBMITTED PHOTO/joanna chattman

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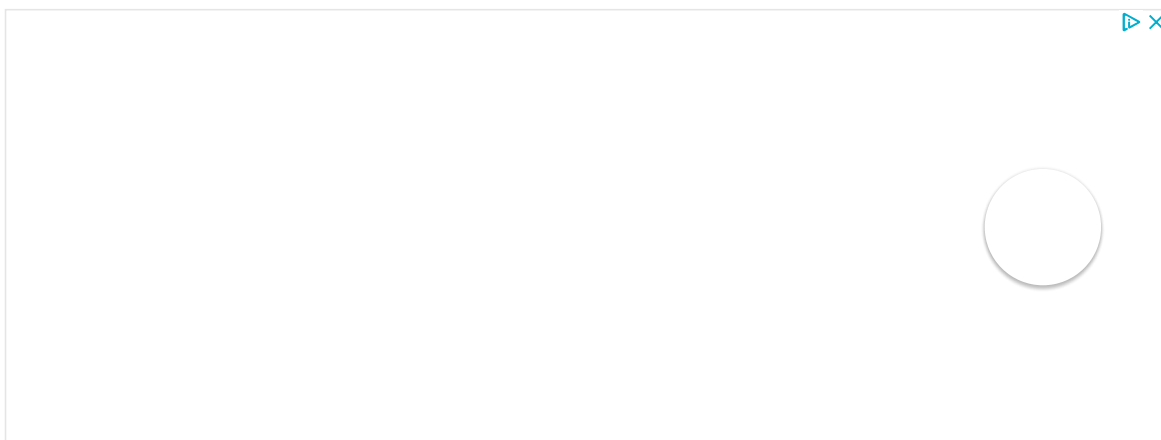
EASTHAMPTON — The Williston Northampton School, which started in-person classes Sept. 1, has not seen a single positive COVID-19 case among students or employees. School officials, who credit a stringent testing regimen and mask-wearing, say they are continuing to stay vigilant.

“The disease makes the rules,” said Ann Hallock, director of communications for Williston.

The private boarding and day school, which serves seventh through 12th grade, has 483 students this year, 432 of whom are being educated on campus.

In order to start attending classes on campus, boarding students had to abide by “safer at home” practices for two weeks and then get two negative COVID-19 tests within 72 hours of each other, the second of which was administered upon their arrival on campus.

Day students had to isolate at home for two weeks with safer at home practices before returning to campus as well, and were also required to get two negative tests.



The policy for students unable to get a test before arriving on campus is to test them and then quarantine them until a second negative test can be confirmed after three to five days.

Safer at home practices posted online by Williston include staying at home except for essential errands and limiting gatherings to household members only.

Students, faculty and staff on campus are required to wear masks in any kind of shared community space, including outside: “pretty much anywhere,” Hallock said.

Students have been complying with requirements that they wear masks and practice social distancing, which are now part of the Williston Community Compact that students and employees must abide by, Hallock said.

“The response of the kids has been really exemplary,” she said. “We’re really seeing kids complying with the rules.”

Sarah Klumpp, who heads the history department at Williston and coaches junior varsity field hockey, also said students are doing a good job following the guidelines laid out by the school. And she credited the masking requirement for keeping the school free of COVID-19 cases.



“The masks are working,” Klummp said. “We don’t plan to take them off any time soon.”

As for following the rules laid out by the school herself, Klummp said it hasn’t been difficult.

“When you work at a boarding school anyway, your life is pretty focused around boarding school,” she said.

Those attending school in person at Williston, or working there, are tested weekly. The school has also been working with the city.

“It’s just incredibly important that we’re taking into account the safety of the community,” Hallock said.

Bri Eichstaedt, the city’s health agent, said that Williston has gone “above and beyond” in complying with state requirements, and that she has seen excellent mask compliance from both employees and students.

“They’ve been awesome,” she said.

Williston is abiding by a closed campus policy for the first three weeks of the school year, meaning that boarding students have to stick to campus and its close environs, while day students have to commit to abiding by safer at home guidelines.

Hallock said the school is currently evaluating its policies, and will be releasing information within the next few days with an update on them.



Of the 51 students attending Williston remotely, Hallock said that most are international students who are not able to attend because of travel limitations. However, she said that some students are choosing not to attend in person because of health reasons, and that some of the remote students may start attending classes on campus later on.

Hallock also said the school has the ability to go fully remote in its instruction if circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic change.

“We’re definitely prepared to do that if we need to,” Hallock said.

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