

November 20, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We take this opportunity to thank you for all you have done to date to stay safe and keep your children and families safe. Your hard work in keeping everyone healthy and safe have allowed us to keep schools open for in-person instruction.

We are now entering a dangerous and uncertain time as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads across our country and state. Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are accelerating across the country, as more governors and local officials announce new measures to try to combat the spread of COVID-19. Locally, the eight counties that make up the Capital Region [reported 271 new infections](#) on November 16, which is the highest total of the pandemic.

We meet with superintendents in Rensselaer, Columbia, and Greene counties twice a week and with our county health departments weekly to discuss Covid-19 related developments and ways we can continue to keep our buildings safely open for students and staff. In working with the local health department, it is concerning to hear of the ways COVID-19 is spreading. This includes parties (i.e., Halloween, birthday, gender reveal, baby showers), family gatherings with members from outside the household, social gatherings with friends, and interstate competitions.

We also learned that some individuals are not being fully cooperative or truthful when contacted by the county. This is a good time to remind everyone that we ask you to offer your full cooperation if you are contacted by a representative of the local health department or the school district. Your cooperation and transparency will help expediate the process to identify those who must quarantine or be tested as well as our efforts to communicate with impacted families and the larger community.

If you or someone in your family is directed to [quarantine](#), please respect what you are being asked to do in the interest of public health. Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others to stop the spread. People in quarantine need to stay home, separate themselves from others in the home, monitor their health, and follow directions from the local health department.

Please continue to follow all safety guidelines outside of school hours including proper use of face coverings, social distancing, handwashing, avoiding gatherings and travel to states with high positivity rates, and keeping your child home if they are sick. We also remind you to complete the daily health screening form for your child prior to sending them to school.

As we look ahead to the Thanksgiving break, we also ask for your help in making sure everyone celebrates and observes this year's activities in a different way that puts health and safety first. According to the CDC, [the safest way to celebrate this year](#) is to celebrate with people in your household. Please consider virtual gatherings or other activities that reduce your and your child's risk of getting the virus. Traveling, sharing food, and attending indoor gatherings outside your household increases your risk – and the risk of spreading COVID-19 within our schools.

We will be required to test students and staff to keep schools open if the virus continues to spread in our region and we are identified by the state as a yellow, orange or red [micro-cluster](#). While we are prepared for the possibility of a shift to remote learning in the future,

we ask for your continued partnership so that we can remain open for in-person instruction. Ultimately, how well we continue to follow the COVID-19 protocols individually and collectively will determine whether we can continue to keep our school buildings open.

Finally, while the initial reports on [two vaccines](#) look promising, they may not be available to us until later this spring. As a result, we need to [prepare ourselves mentally](#) for a long winter ahead. This includes staying informed, being prepared if more restrictions are implemented, living like you are already contagious, shrinking our social bubbles, connecting with others virtually and keeping our guards up.

We know that you have made many sacrifices the past eight months and for that we thank you. We ask that you please do your part to continue to contain this virus so that we can keep our schools open. These vaccines offer great hope – we just need to remain vigilant in controlling the spread of COVID-19 until they are available.

Thank you for your cooperation, support, and patience.