



February 2022



Dear Governor Hochul, New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Bassett, and New York State Education Department Commissioner Dr. Betty Rosa:



School leaders appreciate the support provided by New York State, the New York State Department of Health, and the New York State Education Department with reopening guidance and testing resources to help keep our students and staff members safe in our schools during the pandemic. Public schools in the Central New York Region have returned to full, in-person instruction, five days a week, after many schools in our area operated under hybrid learning models during the previous school year. As school leaders, we understand the need to take appropriate care and caution. Our number one goal is to ensure the safety of our students, staff members, and guests in our schools. School leaders have stood in support of state and local measures, such as mask wearing, in the hopes that when conditions improve and better treatments arrive to address the public health crisis that our students and staff would have the opportunity to resume normal activities with less restrictions. We are hopeful that New York State will create an exit strategy from the pandemic so that public school children can enjoy a return to normalcy.



The news of the recent court case from Nassau County along with the pending appeal to the appellate court indicate a desire from many pockets throughout New York State to set benchmarks for mask wearing to end. News of the Nassau County court decision caused disruption and confusion throughout schools statewide. While the Governor, NYSED and NYSDOH have taken a firm stance regarding the legal claims relative to the pending suit, we would ask the departments to also keep a close ear to the voice of parents, staff members and students. We would also ask that you consider communicating with school leaders, school staff, students and families, in advance of any decision by the court, an exit strategy for COVID mitigation measures.



Our educators, students and parents note a variety of challenges that masks present in the learning environment related to speech and language development, public presentation skills, interpersonal skills, and pro-social interaction. We thank you for your continued leadership and for considering this opportunity to return public schooling towards normalcy. Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,
Mr. Jason Thomson - Superintendent, Baldwinsville Central School District
Mr. Christopher DiFulvio - Superintendent, Cazenovia Central School District
Mr. Michael Eiffe - Superintendent, Chittenango Central School District
Mr. Todd Freeman - Superintendent, Cincinnatus Central School District





Mr. Robert Edwards - Superintendent, Cortland Enlarged City School District
 Dr. David Brown - Superintendent, DeRuyter Central School District
 Dr. Donna DeSiato- Superintendent, East Syracuse Minoa Central School District
 Dr. Lloyd Peck, Superintendent, Fabius Pompey Central School District
 Dr. Craig Tice, Superintendent Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District
 Mr. Thomas Turck, Superintendent Homer Central School District
 Dr. Peter Smith, Superintendent, Jamesville-Dewitt Central School District
 Mr. Jeremy Belfield, Superintendent LaFayette Central School District
 Dr. Mark Potter, Superintendent Liverpool Central School District
 Mr. James Austin, Superintendent Lyncourt Union Free School District
 Ms. Rebecca Stone, Superintendent Marathon Central School District
 Ms. Michelle Brantner, Superintendent Marcellus Central School District
 Ms. Melinda McCool, Superintendent McGraw Central School District
 Mr. Daniel Bowles, Superintendent North Syracuse Central School District
 Mr. Robin Price, Superintendent Onondaga Central School District
 Mr. Jay Tinklepaugh, Superintendent Solvay Union Free School District
 Mr. Robert Hughes, Superintendent Tully Central School District
 Mr. David Bills, Superintendent West Genesee Central School District
 Mr. Steve Dunham, Superintendent Westhill Central School District
 Mr. Jaime Alicea, Superintendent Syracuse City School District



Cc:
 Onondaga County, Cortland County, and Madison County Health Departments
 New York State Senators Fred Ashkar, Rachel May, John Mannion, and Peter Oberacker
 New York State Assemblymembers Al Stirpe, Pamela Hunter, John Lemondes, William Magnerilli

