



May 4, 2021

Dear Elected Official,

On behalf of the 92 school superintendents in the WSWHE BOCES, HFM BOCES, Questar III BOCES and Capital Region BOCES regions, please accept our collective and continued thanks for your support of our schools over the course of this past year and for your recent support of the landmark state budget that will make a critical difference for so many of our schools and students.

We are writing to you today to ask for your help in creating reasonable and responsible guidance for in-person instruction that will allow all of our students to return to school onsite every day when the new school year opens in the fall of 2021. We can confidently say from the experience of this year that there is no substitute for students being in school with their teachers.

While the most recent guidance from April 9, 2021 is helpful in many regards, there continue to be many restrictions that will ultimately make a complete return to school impossible. In particular:

Cohorts at the secondary level

Maintaining cohorts at the secondary level in communities categorized by the CDC as high risk for community transmission presents several challenges. Most counties in the state are considered high risk (despite a decline in the transmission rate) and for many of our districts, it is simply impossible to establish cohorts as defined by the New York State Department of Health. In order for our districts to offer the range of courses they do at the secondary level – courses that students need to successfully prepare for their post-secondary choices – having different groups of students in different classes is necessary. The fact is that this is the only practical way to operate a comprehensive high school.

In order to meet the Department of Health's requirement and bring all students back in-person, many of our districts would need to eliminate a significant number of courses to the detriment of our students' education. Further, this guidance seems to be in contrast to the New York State Department of Health's *"Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency,"* which currently allows high-risk sports in consultation with the local health department. We ask for the same flexibility for in-person instruction.

Social distancing on school buses

While the guidance suggests that parents/guardians should be encouraged to drop off students at school, this presents challenges for parents who do not have transportation or who can no longer adjust their work schedules to transport children to and from school. Further, many of our school campuses are not designed to accommodate a significant amount of thru traffic.

We anticipate continued mask wearing on the bus at all times, in addition to window ventilation and continued cleaning and disinfection. With these measures in place, we believe a change to the social distancing requirement on the bus is both reasonable and necessary in order to have all students learn in person every day next year.



Social distancing in classrooms and cafeterias where students are eating

While many districts are able to flex spaces and, to some extent, schedules to accommodate students eating while six-feet apart, implementing this model for all students presents many challenges. In order to have all students onsite, many districts would need to have some students eating lunch as early as 9:30 a.m., which is clearly not practical or in the best interest of students. Allowing students to eat while three-feet apart would allow all schools to feed all students, in-person and on a reasonable schedule.

Guidance on in-person, virtual and hybrid learning

The 92 school superintendents in the WSWHE, HFM, Questar III and Capital Region BOCES regions are committed to having all students return for in-person learning in September. However, in order to do this, it will be critical that we receive guidance from the New York State Department of Health by May 15, 2021 and from the New York State Education Department thereafter. Waiting until the last minute will not provide adequate planning time, which is not in the best interest of our students or staff.

This guidance should outline protocols for in-person instruction of students, as well as virtual instruction and a hybrid (a mix of in-person and virtual learning). As much as we want students in classrooms with their teachers, we recognize that the prolonged nature of the pandemic and individual family needs will require districts to be prepared for all models of instruction.

Since September, our schools have implemented reopening plans with fidelity. These plans include social distancing, the correct use of masks, cleaning and disinfection protocols, careful monitoring of community spread of COVID-19, and a mix of high-quality learning models. We ask that you take into account the good work being done by all of our schools as you consider the changes we are requesting to the existing state guidance.

If we can be of any assistance in helping to build your or your staff members understanding of these concerns, we are happy to meet at your convenience. As always, thank you for your partnership and support of the children of the WSWHE, HFM, Questar III and Capital Region BOCES regions.

Sincerely,

James P. Dexter
District Superintendent
WSWHE BOCES

Anita M. Murphy
District Superintendent
Capital Region BOCES

Dr. Gladys I. Cruz
District Superintendent
Questar III BOCES

Dr. David Ziskin
District Superintendent
HFM BOCES



On behalf of the 92 Superintendent of Schools in the WSWHE BOCES, HFM BOCES, Questar II BOCES and Capital Region BOCES regions.

Superintendent of Schools in the WSWHE BOCES region

Michael Healey, Argyle CSD
 Kenneth Slentz, Ballston Spa CSD
 Michael Graney, Bolton CSD
 Dr. Douglas Silvernell, Cambridge CSD
 Dr. Mark Stratton, Corinth CSD
 Kevin Froats, Fort Ann CSD
 Daniel Ward, Fort Edward UFSD
 Dr. Brita Donovan, Galway CSD
 Paul Jenkins, Glens Falls City SD
 Brian George, Glens Falls Common
 Thomas McGurl, Granville CSD
 Mark Fish, Greenwich CSD
 Beecher Baker, Hadley Luzerne CSD
 Andrew Cook, Hartford CSD
 Dr. Jon Hunter, Interim, Hudson Falls CSD
 David Snide, Indian Lake CSD

Michael Markwica, Johnsburg CSD
 Lynne Rutnik, Lake George CSD
 Bruce Potter, Mechanicville City SD
 Kyle McFarland, Minerva CSD
 Christian Fisher, Newcomb CSD
 Michele French, North Warren CSD
 Kyle Gannon, Queensbury UFSD
 Dr. David Glover, Salem CSD
 Dr. Michael Patton, Saratoga Springs City SD
 Dr. Ryan Sherman, Schuylerville CSD
 Kristine Orr, South Glens Falls CSD
 Patricia Morris, Stillwater CSD
 John Goralski, Warrensburg CSD
 Patrick Pomerville, Waterford-Halfmoon UFSD
 Patrick Dee, Whitehall CSD

Superintendent of Schools in the Capital Region BOCES Region

Kaweeda Adams, Albany CSD
 Dr. Timothy Mundell, Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD
 Jody Monroe, Bethlehem CSD
 Dr. Patrick McGrath, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake CSD
 Carl Mumenthey, Cobleskill-Richmondville CSD
 Peggy O'Shea, Cohoes CSD
 Dr. James Niedermeier, Duanesburg CSD
 Kimberly Ross, Green Island Union Free CSD
 Dr. Marie Wiles, Guilderland CSD
 Dr. Maureen Long, Menands CSD
 Brian Dunn, Middleburgh CSD
 Shannon Shine, Mohonasen CSD
 Dr. Cosimo Tangorra, Niskayuna CSD

Joseph Corr, North Colonie CSD
 Dr. Brian Bailey, Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk CSD
 Dr. Thomas Reardon, Schalmont CSD
 Dr. Aaron Bochniak, Schenectady CSD
 David Blanchard, Schoharie CSD
 Susan Swartz, Scotia-Glenville CSD
 Patterson Green, Sharon Springs CSD
 Dr. L. Oliver Robinson, Shenendehowa CSD
 Dr. David Perry, South Colonie CSD
 Francis Macri, Voorheesville CSD
 Dr. Lori Caplan, Watervliet City

Superintendent of Schools in the HFM BOCES Region

Richard Ruberti, Greater Amsterdam CSD
 Dr. Nick Fitzgerald, Canajoharie CSD
 Thomas Ciaccio, Fonda-Fultonville CSD
 David Halloran, Gloversville Enlarged SD
 Heather Philo, Lake Pleasant CSD
 Dr. Leslie Ford, Northville CSD
 Adam Heroth, Oppenheim-Ephratah-St. Johnsville CSD
 Nicole Dettenrieder, Wheelerville UFSD

Stephen Tomlinson, Broadalbin-Perth CSD
 Michelle Ellis, Edinburg Common SD
 John Bishop, Fort Plain CSD
 Dr. William Crankshaw, Greater Johnstown SD
 Christopher Harper, Mayfield CSD
 Richard Rose, Piseco Common CD
 Thomas Sincavage, Wells CSD



Superintendent of Schools in the Questar III BOCES Region

- | | |
|---|---|
| Dr. James Franchini, Averill Park CSD | Aditya Joseph Dhar, Berlin CSD |
| Dr. Angelina Maloney, Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD | Michael Wetherbee, Cairo-Durham CSD |
| Dr. Ronel Cook, Catskill CSD | Dr. Salvatore DeAngelo, Chatham CSD |
| Randall Squier, Coxsackie-Athens CSD | Jeffrey Simons, East Greenbush CSD |
| Benjamin Bragg, Germantown CSD | Tammy Sutherland, Greenville CSD |
| G. Michael Apostol, Hoosic Valley CSD | Patrick Dailey, Hoosick Falls CSD |
| Dr. Maria Suttmeier, Hudson CSD | Suzanne Guntlow, Ichabod Crane CSD |
| Dr. Antonio (Tiney) Abitabile, Lansingburgh CSD | Andrew Kourt, New Lebanon CSD |
| Christine Hamill, North Greenbush Common | Joseph Kardash, Rensselaer City SD |
| Jason Chevrier, Schodack CSD | Dr. Neil Howard Jr., Taconic Hills CSD |
| John Carmello, Troy City SD | Dr. Mary Yodis, Wynantskill Union Free SD |

- cc: Dr. Betty A. Rosa, New York State Commissioner of Education
 Kathy Jo McIntyre, Washington County Public Health Services
 Cathy Medick, Saratoga County Public Health Services
 Daniel Kuhles, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner Saratoga County Public Health Services
 Ginelle Jones, Warren County Public Health
 Erica Mahoney, Hamilton County Public Health
 Linda Beers, Essex County Health Department
 Elizabeth F. Whalen, Commissioner Albany County Department of Health
 Keith Brown, Interim Director of Public Health Schenectady County
 Dr. Amy Gildemeister, Director of Public Health Schoharie County
 Laurel Headwell, Director of Fulton County Public Health
 Sara Boerenko, Director of Montgomery County Public Health
 Mary Fran Wachunas, Public Health Director of Rensselaer County
 Kimberly Kaplan, Director of Public Health of Greene County
 Jack Mabb, Public Health Director of Columbia County

Members of the New York State Assembly

- Jake Ashby
 Michael Benedetto
 Didi Barrett
 Patricia Fahy
 John McDonald
 Angelo Santabarbara
 Matthew Simpson
 Robert Smullen
 Phil Steck
 Christopher Tague
 Mary Beth Walsh
 Carrie Woerner

Members New York State Senate

- Neil Breslin
 Michelle Hinchey
 Daphne Jordan
 Shelly Mayer
 Peter Oberacker
 Dan Stec
 James Tedisco