

July 16, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

With the new school year rapidly approaching, Monroe County school leaders again reach out to you with a sense of urgency. As superintendents, we need clear guidance regarding the reopening of schools so we can put plans in place as soon as possible and communicate clearly to families and staff.

School districts statewide have worked diligently during the past 16 months to implement new public health guidelines. We have done so in collaboration with state and local health authorities. With that said, it is our deeply held belief that the path to a full pandemic recovery must include a full in-person reopening for all students in September.

With as few restrictions as possible, districts will be better able to offer a more traditional experience to students and families. Please give consideration to the recommendations outlined below by the Monroe County Council of School Superintendents and the more than 20 school districts we represent.

Remote Learning

A decision to offer remote learning should be made by individual boards of education based on local circumstances and their capacity to provide this service. Districts offering remote learning should be allowed to create local criteria for program participation, and the state should support development of regional remote learning programs.

Physical Distancing and Masking

Given high vaccination percentages and rare evidence of transmission in schools, all distancing requirements should be eliminated. In alignment with CDC guidance, masking outdoors should not be required in the fall. Indoor masking should be based on local data and determined by districts in collaboration with the local health department. Schools should not be required to collect and track vaccination data.

Capacity

Eliminate outdoor capacity requirements and consider removing indoor capacity limits. If indoor requirements remain, consider vaccination rates to allow for additional flexibility.

BOCES 1

DANIEL WHITE

BOCES 2

JO ANNE ANTONACCI

BRIGHTON

KEVIN MCGOWAN, Ed.D.

BROCKPORT

SEAN BRUNO

CHURCHVILLE-CHILI

LORI OROLOGIO, Ed.D.

EAST HIGH SCHOOL

SHAUN NELMS, Ed.D.

EAST IRONDEQUOIT

MARY GROW

EAST ROCHESTER

JAMES HAUGH

FAIRPORT

BRETT PROVENZANO

GATES CHILI

CHRISTOPHER DAILEY

GREECE

KATHLEEN GRAUPMAN

HILTON

CASEY KOSIOREK, Ed.D.

HOLLEY

BRIAN BARTALO

HONEOYE FALLS-LIMA

GENE MANCUSO

KENDALL

JULIE CHRISTENSEN

PENFIELD

THOMAS PUTNAM, Ed.D.

PITTSFORD

MICHAEL PERO

ROCHESTER CITY

LESLI MYERS-SMALL, Ed.D.

RUSH-HENRIETTA

BO WRIGHT

SPENCERPORT

KRISTIN SWANN

WEBSTER

BRIAN NEENAN, Interim

WEST IRONDEQUOIT

AARON JOHNSON, Ed.D.

WHEATLAND-CHILI

LYNDA QUICK, Esq.

Testing

Testing of students and staff should not be required. Surveillance testing should be offered as an option for a school to remain open if rates increase in a school or district.

Infection Rates

Infection data that are used to make opening or closing decisions should be based on school-specific infection rates, not community rates.

Cleaning Procedures

Recommended cleaning and disinfection procedures should be updated based on the newest scientific information regarding surface transmission.

Health Screening Requirements

Daily health screening process requirements should be eliminated. Schools have a long history of communicating to students and staff that they should stay home when they are sick. The use of a screening tool is now so routine that it has become relatively useless.

Vaccination

Use vaccination rates for individual schools to allow for school or district based flexibility in capacity requirements if masking and distancing requirements remain in place.

Other Guidance and Considerations

Modify current guidance for Interscholastic Athletics, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Food and Transportation Services to align with the recommendations above.

Gov. Cuomo, we remain ready to partner with you to provide the best experience we can for children and families, all while prioritizing the safety of our school communities. We truly appreciate your prompt attention to this letter.

On behalf of the Monroe County Superintendents,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence Bo Wright". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lawrence Bo Wright
Superintendent of Rush-Henrietta Central School District
President, Monroe County Council of School Superintendents