



November 20, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Our region remains in the orange micro-cluster zone identified by the Governor, meaning all schools except Big Flats must continue in remote learning. While the data does show that the infection rates have shown some improvement, there was not enough change for Governor Cuomo to alter the status of our schools. Therefore, in order to reopen to in-person learning, testing must occur.

We thank everyone who completed our testing survey. This survey was meant to gauge parents'/guardians' feelings on participating in COVID-19 testing of students at school provided the district is able to facilitate testing. Here are the results of our survey:

- We received 1787 surveys for students in the six schools in the orange zone.
- Of the 1787, 85.3% of the respondents stated they would consent to their child being tested if we must test 100% of the students and staff in the six buildings. This is what is required of schools in the orange zone in order to reopen to in-person learning. (A child cannot attend school in person if he/she is not tested.)
- 86.0% of respondents expressed that they would also consent to testing their child as part of the 25% weekly testing required after schools reopen while in the orange zone (20% each week if the state moves the designation to yellow).

As we have shared in previous updates, reopening to in-person learning is dependent upon the district's ability to meet the necessary requirements of testing onsite, which includes securing the required resources, testing supplies, and health personnel to perform initial and ongoing testing. The district and its administration are working on all facets of these requirements to begin the reopening process.

At last evening's Board of Education meeting, our board members discussed our situation. They agreed that they would like our students back in school for in-person learning as soon as it is safe to do so and when the district can safely accomplish the required testing and maintain the state's requirements for ongoing testing. The Board also expressed a need to be cautious in order to make sure we do all we can to keep our students safe, especially with the expected increasing rates of infection as winter and holidays approach.

We all hope that the pandemic outlook becomes brighter in the near future. The district and the Board need all district residents to help us get there by limiting gatherings, especially during holidays. We may not want our celebrations to be different this year, but in order to decrease the spread of this virus, keep our community safe, and succeed in changing our orange zone status, we need everyone to do their part. As always, please continue to wear masks and keep at least six feet of distance when you must leave your home.

Thank you for your continued care and support of our children. If you have questions, please contact your school office. On behalf of everyone in the Horseheads Central School District, I wish you and your family a very happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools