

Cheektowaga-Sloan Union Free School District

Mrs. Andrea L. Galenski
Superintendent of Schools
(716) 891-6402



Board of Education
Denise McCowan - President
Claire M. Ferrucci - Vice President
Stephanie Dombrowski
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Jeffery Stewart

December 8, 2020

Dear Cheektowaga-Sloan Families,

I wanted to follow-up with all families today regarding the status of our remote instructional program in light of recent developments pertaining to our Orange Zone status.

Last Friday, the New York State Department of Health issued new guidance regarding schools located in Orange and Red Zones. For schools located in an Orange Zone to be open for in-person instruction, at least 20% of in-person students, faculty, and staff must be tested over a one-month period. In a Red Zone, the percentage would increase to 30%. If the testing produces 9 or more positive cases in any school, the school must return to fully-remote instruction. This updated guidance reduces the burden on school districts compared to the previous directives. The older guidance included a condition that students and staff could only return to school buildings if they had received a negative test result, essentially requiring everyone to be tested.

I see our schools in the Cheektowaga-Sloan School District and the surrounding community as a large family environment that needs to be cared for in its entirety. In order to be certain that I was supporting this belief, we needed to balance and consider many factors that focus on everyone's safety and well-being during this time. Given the numerous safety precautions that we have implemented, we do believe that our schools are safe places to be. However, we cannot ignore the continuing increase in COVID-19 cases around us. Even without any in-school transmission, we know that members of our community will continue to be affected, either by contracting COVID-19 or having to quarantine due to potential exposure. Despite everything we are doing to keep everyone safe, the reality of our situation is that some students and staff members will be unable to be present in-person. Staffing shortages in particular would interfere with our ability to provide the best possible educational environment. Additionally, as the holidays are quickly approaching, there is much understandable fear among not only our parents and students, but also our teachers and staff who could be in a position of testing positive for COVID-19 or who are required to be quarantined due to exposure. The result of this could negatively impact families during the holiday season.

While local school districts tried to all take a uniform approach to returning to in-person instruction, no option was universally appropriate for all districts. Some districts have decided to bring students back to school buildings next week. However, based on the many considerations that were noted above, we will join many other nearby districts in waiting until after the upcoming holiday break to resume in-person instruction.

166 Halstead Avenue • Sloan, New York 14212-2295 • www.cheektowagasloan.org

Our mission is to provide a positive academic and social learning environment that fosters independence, responsibility, life-long learning and student success.

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To confirm, the Cheektowaga-Sloan schools will all remain in the 100% remote model for the remainder of December up to the holiday break that begins on December 24th. School will resume on Monday, January 4th. We have been working hard and are prepared to return to our hybrid model at that time and begin COVID-19 testing consistent with current parameters from the New York State Department of Health. It is important for me to mention that much of what happens between now and then is out of our control, including health conditions and government restrictions. Therefore, I will follow-up with an additional communication to confirm our January 4, 2021 return date to in-person instruction as well as our detailed COVID-19 testing plan which we have prepared and are ready to implement upon our return.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support in our efforts to balance safety concerns with the educational needs of your children. There is no question that in-person learning is ideal and we are all making the best of a very difficult and unprecedented situation. If you have any specific needs for your child during this continued period of remote learning, please reach out to your building principal. All principals are committed to working with families and developing plans to best support students who may be struggling, or who need extra assistance during this remote learning period. We are all so grateful for the communication and partnership with our families, and we look forward to continuing to work with individual families as needs arise. We are here to support one another and help all of our students continue to learn and grow during this time.

I wish to extend good health and the safest holiday season to all of our Cheektowaga-Sloan Students, Families, Faculty and Staff.

Sincerely,

Andrea L. Galenski
Superintendent of Schools