



Hamburg Central School District

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

Administration Building

5305 Abbott Rd.

Hamburg, NY 14075-1699

Telephone: (716) 646-3200 x 7220 FAX: (716) 646-3209

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Dear Hamburg Central School District Families and Staff,

I hope everyone remains well. The New York State Department of Health, at the direction of Governor Andrew Cuomo, issued updated guidance regarding the COVID-19 testing requirements for schools in Orange and Red Zone designations. The new guidance clearly recognizes the fact that schools are safe places for students and staff (our current infection rate remains well below 1%). Dr. Anthony Fauci and Governor Cuomo reiterated in a press conference this morning that schools are safe and have much less COVID-19 transmission than the community at large. We also know that students learn best in-person from their teacher. Getting students back to in-person instruction as quickly as possible is imperative for their social/emotional needs as well as their academic needs.

The updated Interim Guidance states:

- Schools located in a geographic area designated as an Orange Zone, a total of 20% of in-person students, faculty and staff must be tested for COVID-19 over the one-month period following the zone designation.
- In a Red Zone, the percentage rises to 30% of in-person students, faculty and staff.
- If our random sampling generates 9 or more positive cases in any school, or if for a sample size of more than 300 weekly tests, generates a positivity rate of 3% or higher, the school will be required to return to remote instruction.

Pursuant to this new guidance, the Hamburg Central School District will return to our in-person hybrid model on December 14th. You should know that a significant number of Erie County School Districts will also return to in-person instruction on this date. All of our school districts share employees who are also parents of children who attend in other school districts. We feel that establishing a common return date among as many districts as possible will limit the need for large numbers of substitute teachers upon our return to in-person learning, which ensures the continuity of instruction for children across the region.

Finally, thank you to the nearly 2,000 families and more than 450 staff members who have offered to participate in our Orange Zone Testing Program. In addition to masking, physical distancing, hand/respiratory hygiene, symptom checking and quarantining, our Orange Zone Testing program is another strategy that we will employ to ensure the safest possible environment for students and staff to learn and work. The BinaxNow Rapid test is specifically being deployed in school districts by the New York State Department of Health for the purpose of testing in Orange or Red Micro-Clusters because of its ease of use (it only swabs the lower part of the nose), which allows for a high volume of testing and maximizes surveillance of the virus in specific geographic areas.

Everyone who will be tested will be notified at least 24 hours before their testing day/time.

We are excited to welcome our Cohort A and C students back on campus on Monday, December 14th, and our Cohort B students on Thursday, December 17th.

Be safe and be well,

Michael R. Cornell
Superintendent of Schools