

December 11, 2020

Dear Cairo-Durham Families:

As COVID-19 cases rise across our region and state, we continue to meet with local superintendents and our county health department to discuss these developments and ways we can continue to keep our buildings safely open.

New York State has implemented a micro-cluster strategy to designate areas with high COVID-19 infection rates as Yellow, Orange, or Red zones, based on positivity rates and daily new cases. If a zip code, census tract or region is placed in one of those zones, there will be restrictions for schools.

While Cairo-Durham is NOT currently in one of these zones, we are working with the county and Questar III BOCES to be ready if any part of our community is labeled. Our district plans to remain open during Yellow, Orange, and Red zones if it can comply with the state's testing requirements.

Today, the Governor announced changes to the zone designation metrics and indicated that the state would announce any new zones on Monday, based on weekend data.

- A **Yellow Zone** is a geographic area (zip code, census tract, etc.) with a 3 percent positivity rate over the past 10 days AND the cluster is in top 10 percent for hospital admissions per capita over the past week and week-over-week growth in daily admissions.
- An **Orange Zone** is a geographic area (zip code, census tract, etc.) with 4 percent positivity rate over the past 10 days AND 85 percent hospital capacity OR the Department of Health determines unacceptably high rate of hospital admissions.
- A **Red Zone** is a geographic area (zip code, census tract, etc.) that is 21 days from 90 percent hospital capacity.

Screening Tests

In order for Cairo-Durham to remain open while in a Yellow Zone, it must commit to conducting rapid screening tests on 20 percent of the in-person students and staff over a two-week period. Students and staff members will be randomly chosen from a pool of individuals who have given consent. If Cairo-Durham enters an Orange Zone, we will need to continue to test new students and staff at a rate of 20 percent per month. If Cairo-Durham enters a Red Zone, we will need to continue to test new students and staff at a rate of 30 percent per month. The school district is preparing plans to train school nurses in the rapid-testing protocol.

Consent Form

Just as we have asked for your continued assistance with following the new COVID-19 protocols, we would need your permission to administer tests to your children. Cairo-Durham will send out a test

consent form in the coming days. This only applies to in-person or hybrid students. Students who are learning in a full virtual setting are not required to be tested. It is important to note that students without consent will not be excluded from in-person learning, however the District still needs at least 20% consent for testing in order to be open for in-person instruction (i.e., if the District does not have consent for at least 20% of students, it will not be able to stay open for in-person instruction).

Testing

The rapid test involves a non-invasive cotton swab swiping just inside the lowermost portion of the nostril. These are not the deep-sinus swab tests that are conducted at medical facilities. The test results are available within minutes. Individual test results will only be shared with families, the school nurse, and the local department of health. We will randomly choose students from a pool of individuals whose parents have consented to the test. If a student or staff member tests positive, they will be sent home and must stay at home until they are released by the county department of health.

Going Forward

We will provide an update if the state designates any part of our community as a cluster zone, including sharing additional information on our testing plan. Please continue to complete our daily screening form prior to sending your child to school.

As always, thank you for all that you do to support our school district. We continue to be encouraged by our community's resiliency amid adversity – and flexibility and patience throughout the pandemic. We will continue to put the health and safety of our students and staff at the forefront of every decision made.

Sincerely,



Michael Wetherbee
Superintendent of Schools