



January 3, 2021

Dear NL Community,

We informed you this past week that the New Lebanon Central School District planned to resume its K-12 hybrid model and reopen all district schools on Monday, January 4. Throughout the break, we have been monitoring the pandemic and have been in contact with the County Health Departments, other schools in our BOCES, and school districts in the Capital Region, regarding our ability to reopen schools safely. District administrators have been monitoring infection rates, new COVID-19 cases, tracking students, families and employees who are subject to quarantine requirements and other data throughout the school recess and this weekend.

As recently as today, Sunday morning, schools in our region continued our regular conversations with the Columbia and Rensselaer County Health Departments. Through these conversations we are able to assess the situation and **we made the determination to provide in-person learning on January 4th.**

While we understand the rationale for some schools switching to remote instruction, we feel that keeping our students learning in an in-person environment is very important and, as long as we can continue to provide in-person instruction in a safe manner with sufficient staff, we will make every effort to do so. Your contributions to these efforts are critically important. These efforts include all students and employees continuing the daily health screening, temperature checks, mask wearing, social distancing and health hygiene.

The New York State Department of Health and public health experts have said that schools are among the safest places one can be during this pandemic. This is due to our strict health and safety guidelines and the low infection rates in schools. According to state data, private household gatherings are driving the spread of the virus (74%) and not elementary students (0.49%), high school students (0.46%) or middle school students (0.19%).

These facts are supported in our own district. To date, there have been 8 positive cases of COVID-19 reported to the New Lebanon Central School District for students and staff. Based on contact tracing information available to the district to date, none of the reported positive cases occurred as a result of spread within our schools. Maintaining these statistics depends on everyone within our educational community adhering to NYS and CDC guidelines not only in school but outside of school as well.

It appears that the public health experts were correct, once again, that there would be a surge of cases following the holidays. The district will continue to monitor the situation and adjust our learning model as needed. While we've made this determination at this point, everyone should

realize and be prepared that as cases increase, our district may be forced to shift to remote instruction. All families need to be prepared for this change should it become necessary.

We encourage our staff and parents to monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and in the event someone is sick, stay at home, contact your primary care provider and notify your school. We appreciate the community's support in keeping our schools safe. We strongly urge families and employees to limit social gatherings and to find ways to stay connected with family and friends virtually during this period of increased community spread.

Once again, thank you for your commitment to our health and safety procedures. We appreciate your continued support of our school district.

Sincerely,

Andrew Kourt
Superintendent of Schools