

**HYDE PARK CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Dear Hyde Park Community,

As you may know, the New York State Department of Health released revised Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. There were several changes since the August 2020 guidance.

Most pertinently, the new State guidance says,

- *Districts may reduce physical distancing requirements to a minimum of three feet between students in classroom settings with certain mitigation measures.*
- *Physical distancing requirements differ by grade level and community transmission risk. Evidence indicates that there is lower susceptibility and incidence of COVID-19 among younger children than compared to teenagers; therefore, in-person instruction represents less risk of on-site transmission in elementary schools compared to middle and high schools.*
- *Districts must minimize this contact to the greatest extent possible and continue to ensure appropriate prevention measures—such as cleaning/disinfection, masking, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.*
- *The CDC no longer recommends physical barriers for mitigation where physical distancing cannot be maintained. A preferred approach is enhanced ventilation and air filtration.*
- *Exceptions Where A Minimum of Six Feet of Distance Must be Maintained*
  - *Six feet is always the required distancing between adults (teachers, staff, visitors) and between students and adults.*
  - *Six feet of distance is required when eating meals or snacks, or drinking, or other times masks must be removed.*

***The Hyde Park Central School District empowers our community to strive for excellence and embrace the opportunities of our globally connected world.***

- *Individuals participating in activities that require projecting the voice (e.g., singing) or playing a wind instrument must be six feet apart and there must be six feet of distance between the performers and the audience during performances and concerts.*
- *Six feet of physical distance must be maintained in common areas and outside of classrooms (e.g. lobbies, auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias, and hallways), where possible.*
- *Prior to making any change to reduce physical distancing to less than six feet between students during academic instruction, decisions must be made with community input.*
- *Districts are required to work with the school community (parents, teachers, staff, etc.) to propose and adopt changes. Ultimately, the school/district's decision to move to shorter physical distances will come down to a local community's risk tolerance based on its unique circumstances.*
- *CDC recommends screening testing based on feasibility and community transmission levels. Schools should follow CDC guidelines when implementing testing plans.*

There are areas where the HPCSD exceeds the guidance and others where we have taken a different approach. I have met with my colleagues, the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health, the District Nurses and LPNs, Unit Leaders, the District Leadership Team, the District SAVE Committee and our administrative team to discuss the guidance and our current plan. All families were surveyed recently about returning for in-person instruction. Our surveillance testing continues.

At this time, we have the full support of the County Department for Behavioral and Community Health to continue our current plan with its multi-layered risk mitigation for the remainder of this 2020-2021 school year. The County will notify me if there is any change to this recommendation. Along with our neighboring districts, we have been very successful at mitigating the spread of COVID-19. We will continue our efforts to safely welcome students back to school for in-person instruction.

Please reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Best wishes,

*Aviva Kafka*

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