



FINGER LAKES CHIEF SCHOOL OFFICERS

Bloomfield CSD, Andrew Doell	Canandaigua City SD, Jamie Farr
Dundee CSD, Kelly Houck	Geneva City SD, Patricia Garcia
Gorham-Middlesex CSD, Chris Brown	Honeoye CSD, Bridget Ashton
Manchester-Shortsville CSD, Charlene Dehn	Naples CSD, Jeff Black
Penn Yan CSD, Howard Dennis	Phelps-Clifton Springs CSD, Matthew Sickles
Romulus CSD, Martin Rotz	Seneca Falls CSD, Jeramy Clingerman
Victor CSD, Tim Terranova	Waterloo CSD, Terri Bavis

July 30, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

With the new school year rapidly approaching, the Finger Lakes school leaders again reach out to you with a sense of urgency. As superintendents, we need clear guidance regarding the reopening of schools so we can put plans in place as soon as possible and communicate clearly to families and staff.

We believe that children benefit from in-person instruction and that schools should be fully open in September. Schools have demonstrated that they are safe places for students and staff. We have learned much from the prior year and know how to better provide safe and consistent learning environments for our students. We should be granted the flexibility to make decisions in the best interests of our students and their families based on our own community situations and circumstances.

With as few restrictions as possible, districts will be better able to offer a more enriching and supportive experience to students and families. Please give consideration to the recommendations outlined below by the Finger Lakes Council of School Superintendents and the school districts we represent.

Physical Distancing and Masking:

Given high vaccination percentages and rare evidence of transmission in schools, all distancing requirements should be eliminated in all school settings. In alignment with CDC guidance, masking outdoors should not be required in the fall. Indoor masking should be based on local data and determined by districts in collaboration with the local health department. Schools should not be required to collect and track vaccination data.

Capacity:

Eliminate outdoor capacity requirements and consider removing indoor capacity limits.

Testing:

Testing of students and staff should not be required. Surveillance testing should be offered as an option for a school to remain open if rates increase in a school or district.

Infection Rates:

Infection data that are used to make opening or closing decisions should be based on school-specific infection rates, not community rates.

Cleaning Procedures:

Recommended cleaning and disinfection procedures should be updated based on the newest scientific information regarding surface transmission.

Health Screening Requirements:

Daily health screening process requirements should be eliminated. Schools have a long history of communicating to students and staff that they should stay home when they are sick. The use of a screening tool is now so routine that it has become relatively useless.

Other Guidance and Considerations:

Modify current guidance for Interscholastic Athletics, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Food Services and Transportation Services to align with the recommendations above.

Governor Cuomo, we remain ready to partner with you to provide the best experience we can for children and families, all while prioritizing the safety of our school communities. We truly appreciate your prompt attention to this letter.

On behalf of the Finger Lakes Superintendents,

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