



Community Call to Action - Irvington, We need your help!

November 17, 2020

Dear Irvington School Community,

We need your help to keep schools open in the coming days and for the remainder of the school year. I applaud the Governor's tireless efforts to contain the surging spread of COVID-19 occurring State-wide and in our own county. To date, his efforts have helped to slow the spread of the virus and saved countless lives. Recently, New York State implemented a [new cluster zone strategy](#) that identifies areas with rising infection rates and places restrictions designed to limit the spread of COVID-19. This mandate will impact our District's ability to remain open to educate students on site should infection rates increase as many predict.

Based on a steadily increasing infection rate, Westchester County or an individual Village or Town, such as Irvington, could be declared a "yellow zone" in the very near future. If the county or our community is declared a "yellow zone," schools may remain open only under the following conditions:

"Schools in yellow zones must test 20% of in-person students, faculty and staff over the two-week period immediately following the announcement of a yellow zone designation.... If the results of the testing reveal that the positivity rate among the 20% of those tested is lower than the yellow zone's current 7-day positivity rate, testing at that school will no longer be required to continue. However, if the results of the testing over the first two weeks reveal that the positivity rate among in-person student, staff and faculty is higher than the Yellow Zone's current 7-day positivity rate, the school will be required to continue to test 20% of the in-person population on a bi-weekly basis."

If our school community is declared a yellow zone, without funding and support from New York State, this well-intentioned mandate will result in the closing of our schools until we can implement the testing requirement. To meet the testing mandate, the District must first test approximately 420 individuals. Currently, there is no school district in the region that is able to meet this mandate. Schools are not licensed to administer COVID tests, and the cost of implementation utilizing a contracted entity is prohibitive. We cannot tolerate any students being denied the ability to attend school and must work together to avoid this outcome.

We in the Irvington school community want for our schools to remain open and want to be able to support the Governor's efforts to fight the spread of this deadly virus. For this to happen, I ask that you go to the [Westchester Putnam School Boards Association's Voter Voice](#) webpage to quickly and simply contact Legislators and the Governor seeking the following support:

- Provide all public school districts free PCR self-administered or other New York State Department of Health approved self-administered tests that provide rapid on-site results.
- Provide for the personnel necessary to administer testing.
- In districts unable to coordinate self-administered testing, the New York

State Department of Health must contract with laboratories to administer tests on-site.

Time is of the essence as infection rates steadily rise; we all share the objective of making sure children in all communities across New York State remain in school, continue to grow academically and flourish socially and emotionally. We need to do all we can - together - to keep our schools open.

Your continued support of our students and our schools is deeply appreciated.

Every student, every day,

Kris

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