



November 13, 2020

Dear Stanley G. Falk School Families,

Following Governor Cuomo's announcement on Monday that much of Erie County was designated a 'Yellow Zone,' the Falk School has worked to gather as much information as possible regarding the new recommendations and requirements that would allow our school to remain open for in-person instruction. According to the governor's plan, once designated a Yellow Zone micro-cluster, the school may remain open to in-person instruction, however, we would need to randomly identify and test 20% of our students and staff each week until the data points in Erie County drop below the Yellow Zone levels. If we cannot meet these testing parameters, we must transition to fully remote instruction. If infection rates continue to increase and we are placed into an Orange or Red Zone, the Governor would force us to pivot to remote instruction immediately.

The students, staff, and parents have worked so hard to follow all recommended procedures to eliminate the threat of COVID-19 in our school buildings. Our efforts have proven successful within our school buildings, however, the rise in positivity rate within the county is posing a challenge for in-person instruction.

We have been in contact with the Erie County Department of Health in hopes that a reasonable plan for testing could be put in place for any students and staff that would volunteer to be tested and allow us to meet the 20% mandate. We have learned that the ECDOH will provide the rapid BinaxNOW tests to schools, for free, but will be unable to provide any further assistance with administering or processing the weekly testing. The BinaxNOW tests are minimally invasive and involve a nasal swab in the lower portion of the nostril. To see a test being performed [CLICK HERE](#). We have yet to receive any test kits, but are hopeful that they will be distributed. For the Stanley G. Falk School to be able to conduct our own testing, the school would need to apply for a Limited Service Laboratory certification. If the Limited Service Lab certification was approved, Falk would then identify a team of individuals to be trained to administer the COVID-19 tests in each of our locations. The school could also partner with an outside agency or health care provider to facilitate the testing. We are working to identify those outside providers, as well as the details included in that strategy. **The school will not begin any testing program without informing parents and staff of the process.**

The limited information as well as the continued rising positivity rate are discouraging. The Falk Team is aware of the importance of in-person instruction, however, the testing mandates for schools in the yellow zone make it extremely difficult to remain open for in-person instruction. While we will continue to explore every option to comply with Yellow Zone testing in the future, this is unrealistic to do in such a short time and without the needed resources. **The Stanley G. Falk School will transition to a fully remote instructional model beginning Monday, November 16, 2020. We will return to in-person instruction no sooner than Monday, November 30, 2020.** Updates will be provided as we near that date.

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It is also important to understand that a continued high positivity rate over the days to come could cause Erie County to move from a Yellow Zone to an Orange or Red Zone, which would make closure mandatory. With how quickly the virus is spreading in our community, there are several additional factors that limit our ability to maintain in-person instruction including many student, teacher and staff absences from our campuses.

Building teams will work directly with you and your child/children to provide an engaging learning experience. Teachers will provide live instruction daily and students will utilize teletherapy for any related services such as Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Counseling. Our goal is to provide uninterrupted instruction and we will work collaboratively to ensure that our Falk students are staged for success.

In the coming weeks, the Falk Team will work to further explore all of the testing options. As we learn more, information will be shared with you. I look forward to a return to in-person instruction, but more importantly, I am hopeful that each and every student, family, and staff member will remain safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachael Greene". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Rachael Greene  
Superintendent  
Stanley G. Falk School