



TONAWANDA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**TIMOTHY A. OLDENBURG, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

December 7, 2020

Dear Tonawanda City School District Students, Staff and Families:

Beginning on Monday, December 14, 2020, our district will return to a hybrid model of instruction for those students that previously participated in this model.

The NYS Department of Health recently released interim guidance for school districts that are in an Orange or Red zone, as defined by the Governor's Micro Cluster Initiative. This guidance can be found on our website.

This updated guidance allows a school district to operate in a hybrid instructional model while the surrounding region is in an Orange or Red zone, providing the required random COVID-19 testing protocols are followed.

The Tonawanda City School District currently resides in an Orange Zone. This designation requires our schools to randomly test 20% of the people in each building. This includes students and staff. Further, this guidance states that "*if the random sampling generates 9 or more positive cases in any school, of one such discrete sample, then the school will be required to close*" for in-person instruction.

Our previous planning and communication with our school community has positioned our district to begin administering the Abbott BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Card. This is a small nasal swab rapid test. We have previously acquired consent from our first random selection of the population in each building. Those people will be contacted soon and testing will begin later this week for our December testing sample. If we remain in an Orange zone designation, we will be contacting the next group of randomly selected people for COVID-19 testing to take place during the month of January.

Please be reminded that our ability to return to a hybrid model will be directly dependent on our ability to secure consent from students (parents/guardians) and staff to participate in the required random COVID-19 testing. In the future, if you are contacted to provide consent to participate in the random testing, please consider consenting to this process so that we may remain in a hybrid model of instruction for our students. Refusing to consent will NOT require a student or staff member to leave the hybrid instructional program. However, each school will need to continue randomly testing the population each month. Failure to have enough consenting participants could jeopardize our ability to operate a hybrid instructional model.

The transition between hybrid and remote instructional models takes time, coordination, and careful preparation among administrators, staff, students, and families both within our district and other

districts in Erie County. **Please use this time to prepare for a return to the hybrid instructional model beginning on Monday, December 14, 2020.**

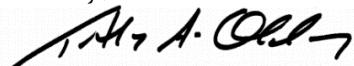
As we prepare to welcome our students and staff back to a hybrid instructional model, please remember:

- Our schools are safe to learn and work. Leading medical experts have deemed public schools safe for students and staff at this time of the pandemic.
- The developmental appropriateness of children being in school in an in-person model is largely reported on and supported by overwhelming research as a significant need and value for every student.
- Our district continues to collaborate with other districts in Erie County regarding the establishment of consistent policy, procedures, and protocols for the planning and potential return to a hybrid model of in-person instruction.
- In Erie County, the local school districts share staff, faculty, programming, and resources. Our decisions have an impact on the other districts in Erie County, and their decisions impact our ability to transition to a hybrid model of in-person instruction.

Please contact the building principal if you have any questions or if we can further support our students with this transition. Please contact your child(ren)'s teacher if you have any questions or need support regarding the instructional transition to the hybrid model from the fully remote model.

Thank you for your continued support and patience with our district. Please continue to take necessary precautions and continue with recommended healthy actions to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 in your homes and in our schools. Go Warriors!

Sincerely,



Timothy A. Oldenburg, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools