



# TONAWANDA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

December 11, 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.**

Our district will welcome back hybrid students to their cohort model beginning on Monday. We are excited to have reached this opportunity due to the change in the Governor's and NYSDOH guidance released last week.

The Governor and many leading and local medical experts have repeatedly stated that schools are safe to open and operate. This is based on science and data. The school districts in Erie County were forced to transition to a fully remote model based on the previous Micro Cluster Strategy requirements of an Orange Zone designation designed by the Governor.

Our district did not transition to a fully remote instructional model due to an outbreak, increase in COVID-19 cases, or concern regarding our safety protocols. Instead, our district has proven that our planning, procedures, and practices have been effective to provide a safe and healthy learning and work environment for our students and staff since September.

Yesterday we completed our first round of required random COVID-19 rapid testing for Orange Zone regions. We had an incredibly successful day in administering our plan, procedures, and testing protocols. This process was safe, efficient, and effective.

We tested 166 people and returned one positive case. This is an infection rate of only 0.6%. The person that tested positive had been home experiencing symptoms for multiple days and participated in our random sample in a special setting. Due to the circumstances surrounding this special case the required contact tracing was completed and did not require any additional quarantines.

Our next round of random testing for this month will begin on Monday, December 21, 2020, as per the mandated time periods included in the new NYSDOH guidance. Your willingness to consent and participate in this process is a big step in supporting our efforts to continue to offer an in-person hybrid instructional model.

Soon we will be conducting the random selection for January. Each month we are required to randomly select and test 20% of each building's population. People may be selected to be tested more than once in this random selection of the population each month.

If you are selected to be tested in the future, please consider consenting to this simple procedure.

Some people may question why we are bringing students back for just a few days before a long holiday break or “ping-ponging” students between instructional models. Vast and widespread educational research clearly confirms that the best developmentally appropriate place for a child to learn and have their needs met is in a school. This is the foundation of our profession as educators. Every day a student is in school is a better day for that student, despite the number of days on a calendar.

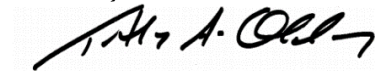
Furthermore, please recognize that many students struggle and face challenges that our district is designed to support and aid. In addition to our curriculum, our programming supports, provides access to, and cares for student needs in meal service, OT/PT, speech, mental health services, counseling, social work, special education, and many more services that are depended on by other students and families.

We realize that the decisions that need to be made during a global health crisis may not please every member of our school community. Our instructional models are imperfect and are continually improving. However, we continue our resolve and unwavering commitment to our profession which is to best serve ALL of our students to the best of our abilities in a safe, developmentally appropriate, and caring manner which is based on data, science, and research.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy A. Oldenburg", written over a light gray rectangular background.

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