

GLOVERSVILLE ENLARGED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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David Halloran
Superintendent

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Dear Gloversville Families:

I hope everyone is healthy and able to enjoy the warm sunny days of summer. Let us hope the nice weather continues. Two thousand twenty has been a very difficult year for the world, our nation, our state, and our school community. These stressful times will come to pass at some point in the future, but we do not know when. Although New York State is at its lowest levels of COVID-19 infections since mid-March, we all know the virus is hitting other parts of the nation hard and the possibility of a recurrence in our state remains a reality.

Last week the New York State Education Department and the Governor's office released a comprehensive guidance document related to the reopening of schools in New York State and set the deadline for district submission for July 31, 2020. The Gloversville Enlarged School District is working diligently to create a plan that best meets the needs of our school community. This is a very difficult, time sensitive task, given the strict social distancing guidelines and health requirements put forth by the state.

A parent survey on reopening school was posted on our website and facebook pages earlier this month, and elicited nearly 700 responses from families across the district. Thank you all who took the time to complete the survey. The results were telling and are available to view on our website. We also recently formed committees of GESD staff volunteers to tackle the challenges of developing our plan for reopening schools, as it relates to Health and Safety, Teaching and Learning, Special Education, English Language Learners, Digital Access and Equity, and Social Emotional Learning. These various committees will meet over the next seven business days, and their work, in conjunction with the parent survey responses will drive the final formation of our reopening plan.

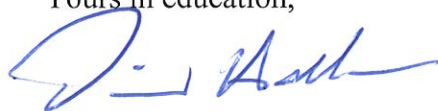
We are committed to providing the best possible educational experience for all of our students, while doing so in a safe and responsible manner. We have been tasked with planning for three separate scenarios for the coming school year. In person instruction, virtual instruction and a "hybrid" of the two. With a few exceptions, educators universally agree that in person learning is much more effective for children than virtual learning. I am proud of the transition to virtual learning our students and staff made this spring when schools closed due to COVID-19, but the fact remains, that it is simply not as effective for the vast majority of students, and far too many were not adequately engaged.

We have the tall task of developing an instructional plan that reengages the children of Gloversville in meaningful learning, while taking all necessary compliance measures to ensure the health and wellness for both students and staff is not compromised. This will require active cooperation from parents and guardians to provide PPE, (Personal Protective Equipment) such as facemasks or coverings for your children each day. It will also require parents and guardians to take daily temperature checks of your children before school and requires parents and guardians to keep sick children home and communicate effectively with the school nurses when that occurs.

Much of the guidance from the state is mandatory, and the requirements on social distancing are incongruent with the size of our classrooms and ratio of our students to staff. This reality may force the district to execute a hybrid model of in person and virtual instruction. This would see students in classes with a limited number of classmates on a rotational basis, such as every other day or every two days, followed by virtual instruction on the other days. We are fully aware of the challenges such a model places on families in regards to child care and transportation and are working hard to ameliorate as best we can, especially at the elementary levels, but the constraints of the state's requirements in regards to social distancing may make daily on site instruction for all impossible to execute.

We will do our best to keep the community informed in a timely manner as we work through these reopening committees to develop our plans. No matter what we decide, it will create inconveniences for all. Students, teachers, parents/guardians, administrators and support staff will all need to adjust to education in the fall of 2020. This is our reality for the foreseeable future and we must all do our part to ensure that our children are intellectually challenged and their overall well-being is nourished and developed. We owe it to them to all be our best in these trying times. Attitude is everything, and how we meet the challenges of educating children amidst a global pandemic is of critical importance. Parents and guardians, we need your patience, cooperation and understanding. Please remain hopeful and optimistic about your children's educational future. They are watching us to see how we act when things get difficult. Let's not let them down.

Yours in education,



David Halloran
Superintendent of Schools