



November 13, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We are writing to update you on the status of our schools, eight months into the global COVID-19 pandemic. The infection rates in our county have not improved, and as a result, the state has continued the orange zone designation for our region, including six of our schools. This means these schools cannot reopen to hybrid learning without the initial testing of all staff and students who would be in the building and subsequent weekly testing of 25% of the buildings' in-person population. This is an extensive process that takes time, resources, and training.

We are working in conjunction with state and local health departments to determine if we can meet the testing requirements and acquire adequate testing supplies. At this time, the number of available tests is limited, so we are working to acquire more tests and to secure the necessary health personnel.

We would like to explain the testing and the requirements for reopening. The test we would use is a rapid test called BinaxNOW. It requires swabbing the front of the nose and is not as invasive as the testing that requires a deeper swab into the nasal cavity. Trained personnel would conduct the test, and results would be available in approximately 15 minutes. Please [click here](#) for a video demonstrating the BinaxNOW test.

The testing required depends upon the designated zone. Currently, the six schools are in the orange zone. If rates in our region improve, we may move to a yellow or green zone. Because we do not know what the future holds for our region, we must prepare for all situations in order to reopen to hybrid instruction. These are the zone requirements:

- **Orange Zone (current zone for all schools except Big Flats):** To reopen to in-person hybrid instruction, the state requires the district to test 100% of staff and those students who would be in hybrid learning prior to reopening the building. After this initial testing, the state requires weekly testing of 25% of the staff and students in the building each week the school remains in the orange zone.
- **Yellow Zone:** Schools may reopen to hybrid learning as long as 20% of the students and staff in the building are tested weekly while in the yellow zone.
- **Green Zone:** No testing is required for schools to operate under safety guidelines. Big Flats School is in a green zone.

Testing of students requires parent/guardian consent. Please know that if a student does not have parent/guardian consent to testing, the student must remain on full remote learning until the schools are placed in the green zone by the state and the district approves the return of the student to hybrid learning.

If the district is able to secure the necessary health personnel and supplies to provide testing, we would need to know how many hybrid students would have parent/guardian consent to be tested. **If your child is in the hybrid model when the six schools schools are open to in-person learning**, please [click here to complete a survey](#). We ask that you complete the survey by November 17. Please complete one survey for each child in your household. Note that this survey is to gather feedback. If and when we are able to provide testing, we will require a signed consent form.

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The six schools continue next week in full remote instruction while our region remains in the orange zone. We ask that everyone continue to do their part to decrease the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding unnecessary outings and contacts, wearing masks and maintain safe distance when we must leave our residences, and washing hands thoroughly and often.

We thank you for your continued patience and for completing the [survey](#). We know this is not an ideal situation, but while we remain in a micro-cluster focus zone, we are required by the state to test students and staff in order to reopen to hybrid learning.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact your school office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Douglas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "D".

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools

More Information:

[District Plan](#)

[Itslearning](#)

[Social Emotional Support](#)

[Technology](#)