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December 30, 2021

Dear Little Flower Community,

I hope this correspondence finds you healthy, well and enjoying the Holiday break. You may have seen recent media headlines that have discussed infection rates and plans for return to school. As the infection rate in Suffolk County exceeds 20%, the district leadership is well aware of the many questions and concerns you may have regarding our return to school on January 3, 2022. The purpose of this correspondence is to keep you informed of our plans as per recent guidance received. As of this writing, we plan on opening as planned this Monday.

Throughout the week, I have attended meetings with Governor Hochul's team, which included NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett, and representatives from the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS). These meetings have helped to bring clarity to several items that have been reported by these local media outlets and other agencies.

First, it is important to understand the "chain of command" that impacts each local school district's COVID-19 protocols. The process is as follows:

1. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Recommendation
2. NYSDOH Adoption
3. SCDHS Adoption
4. Local regulations/practices implemented by school districts to comply with SCDHS requirements

On Monday, Newsday reported a proposal from Governor Hochul indicating that all students and staff members would need to be tested prior to returning to school on January 3. School officials were able to work with the Governor to assist her team in understanding the logistical obstacles to making this occur (including distribution, timeliness, as well as those who may not wish to participate).

Throughout these conversations, the Governor's plan has evolved to the following:

1. Distribution of Tests for Students Upon School Re-entry:

Shortly after our return on January 3, a survey will be distributed to parents to assess the desire to receive home testing kits. Once the kits have been made available to school districts (we have not yet received them), we will develop a mechanism for testing kits to be distributed to interested parents, or will offer parent/guardian consent to have day students tested in-school the day of return by nursing staff. We will not be sending home testing kits with students nor requiring participation in home testing. These tests are meant as an additional tool/resource to help prevent further spread of COVID-19. Further, residential students will be participating in a testing program on Monday through the Residential Treatment Center

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(RTC). This will ensure that our student population is screened early upon their return from the break to mitigate any spread of illness.

2. **“Test to Stay” (TTS):**

TTS is being adopted by the Suffolk County Department of Health. This applies, however, to only **school-based exposures** to COVID-19 (which have been minimal due to universal masking and spacing requirements, as well as increased vaccination rates). Specific guidance on this change is forthcoming from the Suffolk County Department of Health and will be communicated in detail separately from this notice.

3. **Quarantine Reductions:**

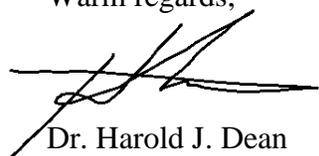
The reduction of quarantine restrictions from ten days to five days only applies to fully vaccinated essential workers (school employees are considered essential in NYS). Unfortunately, this does NOT apply to our students. At this time, the New York State Department of Health is reviewing the CDC guidance for the general public – but it has not been adopted to this point. Additionally, there are strict criteria for a person to meet in order to have the isolation period reduced.

The Governor and all health officials continue to express the importance of keeping students safe, healthy, and in school. As previously expressed, remote learning will only be used when absolutely necessary or if staffing shortages dictate the need for safety purposes. We ask that parents/guardians continue to report all positive COVID-19 cases to the district main office (631-929-4300 x 100) and remind staff that they are required to report positives to HR or administration immediately.

Be assured we will keep the community informed as these plans become finalized. Please keep an eye out on the district website’s [COVID-19 Updates](#) page, as additional correspondence will be posted in the coming days. This will include more details of our district plan for distribution of optional home tests and testing consent, as well as the opt-in survey for those who wish to receive school reintegration home tests for their children.

With your assistance, we will continue to do all we can to keep students, faculty, and staff healthy and safe. I hope you enjoy the remaining holiday recess and wish you a happy and healthy New Year. We look forward to welcoming back our students and staff on January 3.

Warm regards,



Dr. Harold J. Dean
Superintendent