



PLATTSBURGH CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Jay Lebrun

Superintendent of Schools

49 Broad Street
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Ph: (518) 957-6002

jay@plattscsd.org

www.plattscsd.org

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Dear Hornet community:

As has become customary, I endeavor to render decisions at mid-day Wednesday about each successive week's instructional format. Balancing public health needs with educational needs remains challenging. Like most districts, we planned for a two-week, preemptive switch to remote instruction after the holiday recess. This period of remote instruction was intended to allow any surge resulting from holiday gatherings to subside. While the post-Thanksgiving surge featured a more definite, predicted rise and fall of cases, the current COVID data is more mixed. The unavailability of staff because of quarantine orders which would have impeded our reopening in early January has largely abated, but new COVID infection rates in our County haven't reduced as we would have hoped. It is possible that the current level of daily new infections may persist through Winter and Spring, and is reflective of the amount of community interaction (outside of the school setting).

And so, as before, the challenge of reconciling public health strategies with students' educations remains. This is the fourth consecutive week of post-holiday remote instruction, and student needs (both educational and social-emotional) have led to my decision that **we will return to the hybrid mode of instruction on Monday, February 1st, 2021.**

This reopening decision will surely cause anxiety for some students/parents, and those with concerns may choose to explore the parent remote option. The same mixed emotions and divergent views which exist in our community are reflected within our staff, but as we did with success in the Fall, we will again receive students, maximize their educational and social-emotional growth, and promote the same high safety and hygiene expectations as were in-place prior to this conversion to the remote mode.

As it has since last March, this situation remains fluid: a large-scale vaccination effort has begun in our County, but new variants of the virus have been confirmed in our State. I've previously advised that hybrid schooling may take an 'on again, off again' flavor, and this potential persists... and may extend through the end of this school year. Throughout, we will continue to monitor the situation closely, consider input from stakeholders, and try to navigate the often-competing needs of public health and student education. This balance is difficult, but we will continue to do what we believe is best.

I hope that this return to hybrid instruction will be safe and sustainable, but as quarantine

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that advances intellectual, physical, social, and cultural development.

orders are made by the Clinton County Health Department (most of which stem from interactions outside of the school setting), we may need to shift certain subsets of our operation (classes, grades, schools) to remote instruction. As always, we'll seek advice for such from the local public health authorities, and strive to limit the impact of possible targeted conversions to remote instruction.

The return to hybrid instruction will entail a return to our previous system of distributing free meals – wherein multi-day meal packages will be sent home with students on their 'in-person' days, or made available for pick-up by fully-remote students' families at any of our school buildings.

You may be aware that the Governor recently authorized, with conditions, the start of 'high-risk' Winter sports. I don't yet have details to share about the impact of such in Section VII, as the County Health Director must assess and authorize this interscholastic competition. Conversations have begun, and we anticipate the initial written guidance from the Clinton County Health Department shortly. I would characterize the potential for the return of these school sports as possible, but not imminent.

The status of June Regents' exams also remains unresolved, and I've seen no timeframe for a decision about these. There are, however, important changes (which we believe students and parents will view favorably) to AP and CAP course parameters. A separate message about this topic will be sent directly to affected families tomorrow.

As I've shared previously, the early-release day which had been scheduled for February 2nd, 2021 is cancelled, so as to allow more time for instruction.

Otherwise, we will continue to aggressively sanitize our facilities, and to reinforce best-practices regarding distancing and mask-wearing. I again ask for everyone's best-efforts in limiting community spread of this virus, in helping to make our return to hybrid successful, and in facilitating our eventual return to fully in-person instruction.

With continued thanks,

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