

Lancaster Central School District

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Lancaster, NY 14086
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Michael J. Vallely, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Lancaster Students and Families:

We are excited to welcome students back to school on Monday, December 14, 2020. We have missed them since we were forced to move to 100% remote learning just before Thanksgiving due to State mandates. Students will return to the learning model that they signed up for at the beginning of the school year. Please note that Monday is an “A” day. We recognize that this continues to be a stressful time for families and want to reassure you that there has been minimal spread in schools across the state and that has been the case in the Lancaster Central School District as well.

We had an incredibly successful week of administering our testing plan, procedures, and protocols. This process was safe, efficient, and effective. **We have tested over 500 faculty, staff, and students this week with 3 tests coming back positive (positivity rate is approximately 0.50%).** These current test results support our overall testing results since the beginning of the school year. Additionally, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) has recently stated, “student-to-student transmission is incredibly rare.”

Over the course of the coming weeks we will continue to randomly test students, who have consented, and adults across the district. Families will be notified via our code red system if their child has been selected for testing. For those that are still unsure about testing, you can [watch this video of one of our students going through the testing process](#). The same video can be seen on our website and social media outlets.

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, as we prepare to welcome students back to school, please recognize that many students and families struggle and face challenges that our district is well-equipped to support, especially when we can work directly with students. In addition to our academic programs, our students benefit from a host of services including meal service, occupational, physical, and speech therapy. In addition, mental health services, counseling, social work support, and special education support and accommodations are vitally important to our 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 to fulfill our mission 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. Vallely". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Michael J. Vallely, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools