

# NYS Micro-Cluster Mandate

November 19, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well. I am writing to share important information with you regarding **Governor Cuomo's newly implemented micro-cluster strategy to reduce the spread of COVID-19**. New York State has created yellow, orange, and red zone designations, and each zone identifies areas with rising infection rates and places restrictions designated to limit exposure to the virus. While we applaud the Governor's efforts to contain the surging numbers of Covid-19 cases occurring in Westchester County and New York State, this well-intentioned mandate severely impacts our School District's ability to remain open.

Although we are not within a micro-cluster region as of the writing of this letter, Westchester County is trending in the direction of being designated as a yellow zone, or possibly an orange zone, based on the regional COVID-19 positivity rates. That designation may be upon us as early as this week. If a school is designated as being in a yellow zone region, schools may remain open under the following conditions:

*Effective the week of November 16, 2020, schools in yellow zones must test 20% of in-person students, faculty and staff over the two-week period immediately following the announcement of a yellow zone designation. If the results of the testing reveal that the positivity rate among the 20% of those tested is lower than the yellow zone's current 7-day positivity rate, testing at that school will no longer be required to continue. A positivity rate in a school that is lower than in the yellow zone is a sufficient demonstration that in-person instruction is not a significant driver of local viral spread. The current positivity rate for zones can be found at*

<https://forward.ny.gov/percentage-positive-results-county-dashboard>

*However, if the results of the testing over the first two weeks reveal that the positivity rate among in-person student, staff and faculty is higher than the Yellow Zone's current 7-day positivity rate, the school will be required to continue to test 20% of the in-person population on a bi-weekly basis. (Source: NYS Department of Health, November 14, 2020)*

Our priority is to keep schools open for in-person learning while keeping the rate of infection in check, and we are making every effort to do so. We have already begun working toward meeting this COVID-19 testing mandate so that our schools may remain open; however, we will need New York State's assistance in several regards to make this happen. First, the Dobbs Ferry School District would be required to conduct approximately 300 tests over the first two weeks of a micro-cluster designation. If Dobbs Ferry is declared a yellow zone, without funding and support from New York State, this well-intentioned mandate will result in the closing of our schools since we have no means of meeting this testing requirement.

Should we be designated within a micro-cluster region, the Dobbs Ferry School District will temporarily transition to our fully remote learning model until we can work through the financial, legal, and logistical considerations with the state.

With the holidays swiftly approaching, I encourage everyone to continue to remain super vigilant so that we may reduce the transmission of COVID-19 within our community, and keep our schools open for in-person learning. Please continue to follow all of the COVID-19 safety measures, including wearing a mask, social distancing and limiting holiday get-togethers. I look forward to providing you with another update as soon as we receive additional clarification from the state. As always, this is a community-wide effort and we thank you for your continued support.

Best,

*Lisa Brady, Ed.D.*  
Superintendent