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Dear Parents and Guardians:

I want to update you with our plans for returning to school and share information regarding our mandated COVID testing of staff and students. The goal is to return to our in-person and/or hybrid learning plan on January 11th. Our current health and safety focus has not changed, and we will continue to do all that we can to slow the spread of this virus in our community.

It is my belief that our students should be back in school with their teachers to the greatest extent possible. We were very successful with that plan through much of the fall, and would have been able to continue until staffing became an issue due to contact tracing and quarantine orders from the Oneida County Department of Health. We will continue to follow all requirements from both county and state officials and the Department of Health.

As the Governor recently pointed out, schools are not super-spreaders of COVID. For NY Mills, this is in large part due to the diligence of our staff, our parents, and our students. That being said, NY Mills, as with the majority of Oneida County, is in a yellow micro-cluster. That designation comes with some additional requirements that include testing of staff and students. Within the first two weeks of NY Mills resuming in-person and hybrid instruction, 20% of staff and students must be tested for COVID. If we fail to have 20% of staff and students test, NY Mills will be forced to continue with 100% remote instruction. If our percentage rate of infection is below the average of our region, no further testing will be needed at this time. If you have not yet filled out a "permission to test" form, please fill out the form found [here](#).

Recognizing that there is some anxiety about testing, a video showcasing testing can be found on our website. The COVID testing is much less invasive than the testing initially done at the onset of COVID testing. Results of the test are quick-about 15 minutes following the testing. Testing will be done here at school. If you would like to be with your child(ren) while they are being tested, please let us know that as well.

To ease the return to school process, if you would like to have your child(ren) COVID tested prior to returning on Monday, testing will begin this Friday, January 8th. If you would like to participate in testing this Friday, please contact Mrs. Hurlbut at 315-768-8129. If you have any questions regarding testing, please contact Mrs. Germann at 315-768-3391.

Respectfully,

Joanne Shelmidine, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools