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April 23, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

There have been changes made to our August 2020 reopening plan that are in alignment with the April 9<sup>th</sup> NYS Department of Health (DOH) update. The April 9<sup>th</sup> update was to provide school districts with guidance as we align our plans with the most recent recommendations from the CDC to prioritize safe in-person learning in school while still adhering to all of the safety precautions that we have been following.

The prioritization of returning students to in-person learning was the key focus of the DOH update, and certainly the mission of this district. Our staff has done an incredible job making sure that whether remote or in person, student learning was the overarching goal. The staff also overwhelmingly supported the return of our students and clearly, so did our families. This week has felt like the first week of school in September. It is wonderful having so many of our students here every day.

So what changed in our plan-the CDC cited a study done in Massachusetts that found no difference in infection rates whether students were wearing masks and maintaining 6 feet of distance or wearing masks and maintaining 3 feet of distance. So, given that, we could bring more of our students back for in person learning rather than maintaining the hybrid schedule. In PE, chorus and band-it had been 12 feet of distance, that has been changed to 6ft. Masks must be worn at all times. Students should not be clustering in groups-but moving to their classrooms. We have asked students to only go to their lockers 2 or 3 times during the day, rather than every period.

Most of our plan did not change. Masks must be worn at all times. In the cafeteria, students are separated by barriers with no one sitting directly in front of another student. The buses can only have one student per seat-unless siblings are riding the bus-they can share a seat. Students assist with wiping down their desks between classes.


What remains critically important is remembering that we all are impacted when an infection occurs. Please do not send your child to school if they are ill. Continue to stress the importance of hand washing. Please limit your time in crowded areas. Please complete the daily screening so that we know students are symptom free when they come to school.

We still have students learning remotely. We have 31 elementary students and 25 secondary students who remain 100% remote. Very little changed in our elementary classrooms, most of the students who started the year remote, remain remote. The change has largely been at the secondary level.

Otherwise, we are enjoying the beginning of spring and I can hardly believe we are in the fourth marking period. Celebrations still are limited. We will have graduation on June 25<sup>th</sup> and it will be outside by choice-weather permitting. There will be a limited number of guests who can attend. There will also be a Jr/Sr Prom this May. Our students have done a wonderful job planning for a safe event where they can come together in this traditional rite of passage.

The priority of this district is the safety of students and staff. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [jshelmidine@newyorkmills.org](mailto:jshelmidine@newyorkmills.org) or 315-768-8127.

Respectfully,

  
Joanne Shelmidine, Ed. D  
Superintendent of Schools