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To the NY Mills UFSD Community:

Recently, Governor Cuomo gave the discretion to school districts to participate in high risk interscholastic athletics, if they choose, subject to the approval of the local Department of Health (DOH).

Winter sports for NY Mills consists of: Indoor Track, Boys Varsity Bowling, Boys/Girls Basketball and Girls Volleyball. Indoor track is not being offered by the section this year, due in part to availability of sites. Bowling is a low risk sport and is being run virtually with each team only bowling at their "home" site. Both Basketball and Volleyball are considered high risk sports.

I have reviewed all information that I have received from our Medical Director, and the Oneida County Department of Health and have spoken to some of our coaches. There are multiple factors that I feel must be weighed as we consider participating in high risk sports at NY Mills. And while I certainly understand the disappointment with the decision to delay the start of sports that are considered high risk. The factors that have been taken into consideration are:

- Both the County Executive and the Department of Health advised against participating in any high-risk activities. In addition, we have had no guidance on what a return to sports program should entail.
- We do not know what issues the variants of the virus present-nor is there a way to capture data that tells us who is impacted.
- Another consideration is the number of students who have been home due to health concerns-it is reasonable to assume if there were enough concerns regarding infection rates to have students in a 100% remote learning environment, it should impact the decision to introduce high-risk activities.
- We have another potential super-spreader event this coming weekend with the Super Bowl and, then, February break. I am hoping that we do not have to move our instruction to fully remote due to these events.
- Our neighboring counties, where many of our competitors are located, have strict metrics that are either eliminating or curtailing high-risk activities.

I did speak to some coaches and took their concerns into consideration. These coaches also teach-so are very aware of the inconsistencies of restrictions during the day and then the easing of those restrictions

after school. These professionals felt strongly that we should ease into high-risk sports and activities, hence the sports conditioning and skills programs that have been proposed, along with introducing other extracurricular activities. Depending on the number of students who sign up, we will include other coaches to lead drills and activities for students and, depending on the students that sign up, the drills and activities will be sport specific.

The only season that did not play in 2019-2020 was Spring. I feel that we should try to do everything we can to allow a spring season, with moderate risk sports, to occur. Those sports, again, are outdoor sports. We had a successful fall season, in part due to the safety protocols in place and the fact that the sports were outdoor sports.

If the guidance does come from the county officials and NY Mills can safely participate in sports, we will certainly do that. Until then, as we have done from the very beginning, we will put the health and safety of our students, staff, and families at the forefront of each decision.

Respectfully,

Joanne Shelmidine, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools