



Amherst Central School District

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Superintendent

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Dear Amherst Families,

The purpose of today's letter is to follow up, as promised, with a final determination about resuming our Hybrid Instructional Model on Dec. 14. We want children to be in school and we believe our schools are safe, but we are facing a significant staffing challenge at this point. This current circumstance does not allow us to achieve our instructional goals for a return to in-person learning and drives our decision to postpone reopening until Monday, Jan. 4, 2021. Remaining in the fully remote model until then will allow continuity of instruction and services.

As you may have noticed from my emails about reported positive cases from the Erie County Department of Health, the past two weeks has seen a significant increase in student and staff positive cases. As of yesterday, the [NYS COVID-19 Report Card](#) shows a total of 44 lab-reported positive cases of students and staff within our district. In the first 12 weeks of school, we had 19 cases. In the past two weeks since Thanksgiving, we have had 25 cases, including five since Monday among staff.

This uptick in the number of positive cases follows the trend that state and national health experts had predicted. From a staffing standpoint, this impacts **all of our employee groups** that would be called upon during in-person instruction. In addition, the lack of available subs affects our ability to provide instruction and other critical services.

Therefore, we will not open on Monday, Dec. 14. We will push our return to the Hybrid Instructional Model, again tentatively, to Monday, Jan. 4, 2021. We will remain in the 100% fully remote learning model through Dec. 23. Our winter recess is Dec. 24-Jan.1.

We started COVID-19 testing this week and our system is running smoothly. We will continue next week and the following week to test 5% of those who have consented so we are prepared to reopen.

If you are like me, I am sure you are disappointed with the reopening date postponement as this calendar year has been very difficult for us all. Please heed the warnings of health experts who advise gathering only with loved ones in your immediate household this holiday season so we can slow the spread of the virus.

I will continue to provide you with updates as new information emerges and as January 4, 2021 approaches.

Thank you,

Anthony J. Panella, Superintendent