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Dear Parents and Guardians of the Middletown City School District,

The COVID-19 positivity rate in Orange County, and more specifically, areas within our school district, remains at a high level. Due to the positivity rate, three of our schools were identified as "precautionary/yellow zone," as a part of the New York State micro-cluster initiative. Additionally, our current positivity rate indicates a concerning level of community spread. As has been pointed out by Orange County Health Commissioner Dr. Gelman and Governor Cuomo, the weeks leading up to and following the Thanksgiving holiday have shown us the COVID-19 spread is a community-based problem. However, when appropriate measures are taken (universal face covering policies, social distancing, and hand and respiratory health) in combination with COVID-19 testing in schools (**only students who are participating in in-person learning as a part of our hybrid model are tested**), even though we are in a precautionary zone, we can open safely. Our goal remains to open our schools for in-person instruction for students in Grades K-12 within our hybrid model on Tuesday, January 19, 2021.

We have all witnessed the countless negative implications the spread of COVID-19 has caused for school operations and our community at large. As a district, we continue to work to make sure we provide our students and families with support structures as we navigate this pandemic together.

As per Governor Cuomo's Executive Order regarding the "[Micro-cluster Action Initiative](#)," regions with higher levels of community spread will be designated as Yellow, Orange or Red zones. With those designations, certain testing requirements exist to remain open for in-person instruction. The basics of the testing requirements for students who are coming to school campuses for in-person learning are:

- **Yellow Zone** – Each school must test 20% of in-person students and staff over the two-week period immediately following the announcement of a yellow zone designation. If the results of testing reveal that the positivity rate among the 20% is lower than the yellow zone's current 7-day positivity rate, testing at that school will no longer be required. *In the event the results reveal that the positivity rate among in-person students and staff is equal to or higher than the zone's current 7-day positivity rate, the school must continue testing 20% of its in-person population on a bi-weekly basis.*
- **Orange and Red Zones** – Schools can remain open in Orange and Red Zones. However, they must conduct testing on a monthly basis as follows:
  - Orange Zone - 20% of in-person students and staff over a month
  - Red Zone - 30% of in-person students and staff over a month

*Testing continues on a rolling basis, monthly until the Governor determines an area is no longer a "hot spot" and the Zone designation changes.*

We are beginning the cumbersome process of preparing for COVID-19 testing in our schools. If we successfully put testing in place in our schools and continue to follow the New York State guidelines, we will:

- Open our schools for in-person instruction for students in Grades K-12 within our hybrid model (first day of in-person instruction is Tuesday, January 19, 2021)
  - **Cohort 1**
    - Tuesday, January 19 (in-person)
    - Wednesday, January 20 and Thursday, January 21 (synchronous - virtual)
    - Friday, January 22 (synchronous - virtual)
  - **Cohort 2**
    - Tuesday, January 19 (synchronous - virtual)
    - Wednesday, January 20 and Thursday, January 21 (in-person)
    - Friday, January 22 (synchronous - virtual)

We cannot do testing on our school campuses without the partnership of our families. At this time, we are asking all families who have students who are learning in-person to complete a brief survey. The survey data collected will support our planning as we gauge potential participation in school based COVID19 testing conducted by Horizon Family Medical. At this time, testing will only take place on school campuses identified by the micro-cluster initiative:

- Twin Towers** Middle School
- Presidential Park** Elementary School
- Maple Hill Elementary Annex at Truman Moon**

Please click [here](#) to see the New York State micro-cluster map of the Middletown zone.

Your response to [this survey](#) does not bind you to your response when testing begins in January 2021. **We respectfully ask you to complete the survey no later than December 28, 2020. One survey entry is needed for every in-person student, grades K-12 in all schools, not just those schools within the yellow zone.**

Thank you in advance for your participation in the survey.

With continued gratitude for your partnership,

*Richard Del Moro*

Richard Del Moro, Superintendent of Schools