

WHITEHALL CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PO Box 29, 87 Buckley Road, Whitehall, New York 12887-3633
Whitehall – Birthplace of the U. S. Navy – www.railroaders.net

Ethan Burgess
Jr-Sr High School Principal
518 499-1770
eburgess@railroaders.net

Patrick M. Dee
Superintendent of Schools
518 499-1772
pdee@railroaders.net

Judy Gould
Elementary School Principal
518 499-0330
jgould@railroaders.net

Julie Umar
Director of Special Education
518 499-1771
jumar@railroaders.net

Kate DuBois
School Business Manager
518 499-0346
kdubois@railroaders.net

To the Whitehall Community:

November 18, 2020

Over the past several months, the Whitehall school community has cooperatively worked together to support a safe return to a hybrid model of in-person instruction at the elementary school for the 2020-2021 school year. By taking extraordinary steps to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission within our district, we are happy that we have been able to maintain our model of instruction to this point, and are excited to continue to have students in the building on a daily basis.


While the infection rate in Washington County remains relatively low, the infection rate across New York State is increasing, and the CDC and DOH are projecting an increase in community transmissions due to the holiday season. As part of Executive Order 202.68, Governor Cuomo introduced a “Cluster Action Initiative” which classifies regions, based on infection rates as yellow, orange, or red. If designated, each color requires enhanced public health restrictions, which include limits on non-essential gatherings, houses of worship, restaurants and taverns, gyms and fitness centers, personal care services, and schools. If a school is located in an area identified as an Orange or Red zone, those districts would be required to transition to a fully remote learning environment.

Yellow Zones however, do allow for schools to remain open, those schools in yellow areas must conduct random weekly COVID-19 tests on 20% of the in-person population (students, faculty and staff). For us, that would mean we would be required to test approximately 95 individuals weekly (a different 95 individuals each week) until the district can show that it is below the State threshold for the region. Before any testing of the student body could occur, the district would be required to obtain signed consent from a parent or guardian. Please note, we are NOT planning ANY testing at this time, in the event that we must test, we would notify the community and seek consent at that time.

We will continue to will work with our partners at the Washington County Department of Health to explore all options to continue our current model of instruction. It is important to note that in the event the Whitehall CSD falls within a yellow zone, it is likely that neither the district, nor the county would have the resources necessary to comply with the testing requirements that have been set forth by the state. This would likely force us to transition to fully remote instruction. We are however continuing to investigate this and look for potential solutions that would enable the district to remain open in the event that the region is identified as a Yellow Zone.

As a school community, we understand how important it is for students to be in school. In-person instruction is not only beneficial to our students’ academic and social development, but also provides our parents/guardians and family members the opportunity to work without the added burden of securing daily childcare. The community of Whitehall has dedicated a great deal of time, energy, and resources to allow the district to operate on our current model and I could not be more-proud of the work that has been done to this point. I would however, continue to implore every member of our community to continue to exercise caution and follow all recommended COVID safety procedures as we move forward; this will help to keep the regional COVID cases low and ensure that we can continue to maintain in-person instruction at our elementary facility. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the district at 518-499-1770.

Best,


Patrick Dee
Superintendent of Schools