

WHITEHALL CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Whitehall – Birthplace of the U. S. Navy – www.railroaders.net

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Good Afternoon,

As of today, July 28th, 2021, the State of New York State has still provided no guidance to schools on COVID protocols as we prepare to reopen in the fall. In the absence of any new guidance, local county department of health officials, BOCES Leaders, and School Superintendents meet weekly to develop a collective vision on what reopening may look like.

Yesterday, the CDC announced guidance that masking is recommended in all K-12 educational environments. As such, at this point we do anticipate that masks will be required of all faculty, staff and students regardless of vaccination status.

In a continued effort to return to full-time quality instruction the Whitehall Central School district will offer only in-person instruction as the primary method for instruction during the 2021/2022 school year. Remote learning as an educational choice will not be offered as an option, except in instances of student quarantine and/or necessitated on days in which a school building cannot be physically open for illness, damage, district provided transportation needs, weather conditions or as REQUIRED by law. All students will be expected to attend in-person instruction each day.

One of the most pressing concerns considered is our ability to provide transportation. The current recommendation is to maintain physical distancing “to the greatest extent possible.” In order to fully reopen, the collective thinking on buses is that:

1. Mask be worn at all times (This is not an option- this is a Federal Mandate for public transportation)
2. Windows open to provide ventilation to the extent possible.
3. When possible, parents will be encouraged to drop children off to reduce the population density on school buses.

In lieu of any state direction, the workgroup plans to turn their attention to fall interscholastic athletics and what the safety precautions might look like when these activities start in just a few weeks. The other big challenges that must be considered are indoor physical distancing and mask wearing expectations.

Last, but certainly not least, public health officials in the group are very concerned that COVID positivity rates in our region are starting to climb back up and that the new variant spreads much more aggressively. Health Officials state that the most effective deterrent to the spread of the virus and ability to return to normalcy, is the vaccination of anyone eligible to receive a vaccine.

We are committed to reopening schools for full, in-person instruction in the fall. We eagerly await guidance to be able to bring our faculty, staff and students back to a safe learning environment. As always, guidance from the State is very slow in coming. Please understand that the information above is subject to change depending upon guidance that we may receive from the State. I will be in regular communication with changes as they unfold. Thank you all for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Dee', with a large, stylized initial 'P' that loops around the word 'Sincerely,'.

Patrick Dee
Superintendent of Schools