



Mr. Adam Stoltman, Superintendent
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April 12, 2021

Dear Alden CSD Families:

I hope everyone enjoyed the recent spring recess. The purpose of this letter is to update you on our efforts to move forward with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) revised guidance to schools. Over the last several weeks, we have been supporting this potential change as follows:

- On March 12, a letter was sent on behalf of all the Erie-Niagara School Superintendents Association to Governor Cuomo urging him to direct his state agencies to review their guidance to schools, including the social distancing rules, in light of the most recent research around the spread of COVID-19 in school settings. That letter was signed by nearly every area school superintendent and 22 local physicians, including specialists in Infectious Disease and Pediatric Psychiatry.
- On March 19, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updated its guidance for schools, which stated that it was safe for students to be in school with three feet of social distance, as long as other mitigation strategies (masking, hand hygiene, etc.) were followed.
- Reviewing all health and safety protocols in light of updated CDC publications.
- During our faculty & staff, building-level team and administrative team meetings since the CDC's release, we have been discussing the details associated with a return to full in-person learning for all students.
- Our administrative teams have been developing contingency plans around school lunch, district transportation, and classroom seating that can be enacted in response to updated guidance to schools once we receive it.
- Plans that allow the fully remote option to remain in place through the end of the year for all children who are currently in that placement.
- Conducted a parental survey indicating overwhelming support to return to full in-person learning.

Given the guidance from NYSDOH and feedback from our stakeholders, our planning has evolved to the point at which the District is prepared to return all K-6 students to full in-person learning beginning April 26, 2021. April 26th is the most responsible return date because it is two weeks after our spring recess and the return home of many of our families. Any travel-related COVID-19 infections can be addressed. It will also take time to make final preparations regarding routing buses, scheduling classes, and allowing for families to adjust their routines at home.

The updated NYSDOH guidance clearly articulates thresholds for social distancing within the school setting that varies between grade levels and COVID-19 transmission within a region. On April 10, 2021, the ECDOH informed all Erie County school districts that the region is designated in a high transmission zone, which will currently prohibit our grades 7-12 students from returning to full in-person learning. We are continuing to evaluate our current structure in an attempt to bring all students back to full 100% in-person learning as soon as permitted. Students grades 7-12 will continue with the current Blue/Gold Hybrid schedule.

Importantly, the Alden Central School District will be considerate in the event that changes are made, particularly as it relates to our return date of April 26th. We will give students, families and staff as much notice as possible because we know that everyone will need time to adjust to any change we make.

I look forward to sharing more information and details, specifically about the updated guidance during a Zoom Town Hall meeting on April 15, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. You can access the meeting by typing <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84635721963?pwd=Rkh5NFJSWGZCWFZLVVFJMU5XTUIVZz09> in your web browser. The meeting ID is 846 3572 1963, and the passcode is 309360. The meeting can also be accessed on the District's website at www.aldenschools.org.

Thank you for your continued partnership in the learning and growth of your children. I will continue to keep you updated as events require.

Stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Stoltman', with a small flourish at the end.

Adam Stoltman
Superintendent of Schools