



Dear Students, Families, & Staff

As I pen this letter, I do so with a lot of different emotions. As an educator, I realize how important it is for students to be face to face with their teachers. Online learning (if done correctly) can be useful. However, nothing beats the caring and nurturing environment created by teachers in their classrooms. It is especially true for elementary grades. We have seen from the spring that the lower school scholars have better attention spans when receiving in-person instruction.

Moreover, as a parent of a student in our school, I have to be honest in saying this, I'm scared, nervous, and anxious. There is still so much that is unknown about COVID-19. I also fall into the category as a high risk. I say all of this not to overshare. I wanted to let you know that any decision regarding a return to school takes into account the utmost care and concern for our staff, students, and families.

Additionally, we have taken survey data from both teachers and parents. Thank you to everybody who has contributed ideas, feedback, and input to date. As always, we encourage and welcome your communication. After reviewing feedback from both parents and staff, the consensus was they'd be on board with returning to school if we were able to do so safely. Given our space constraints, it is physically impossible to accommodate every student, every day and adhere to the suggested guidelines of The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the guidelines provided by NY State.

Therefore, we have come to the following decision:

- In-person instruction for Grades K-5. (Following an AA/BB schedule with online learning on Wednesday to sanitize and disinfect all buildings.
- Full-day comprehensive online program for 6-9.
- Re-evaluate our in-person and Hybrid plan every three weeks and make adjustments where needed.
- Listen attentively to the needs of staff, students, and families.
- No families are penalized for refusing to participate in our in-person learning program.
- We will provide all of our students with a comprehensive education while respecting the wishes of families.

A major roadblock for K-5 will be bussing. We have reached out to many of the districts that provide bussing, and we have heard very little. Honestly, given how kids interact on the bus, I'm not entirely sure how bus drivers can enforce social distancing during the ride.

Respectfully, we have to make decisions that could ultimately impact others' lives, and that is not our area of expertise. We will follow the science and available guidelines to make decisions in the best interest of our stakeholders. We will be providing weekly updates, as well as having weekly grade-level town hall meetings to answer any lingering concerns that you may have.

I want to close by reminding everyone of the importance of continuing to keep proper precautions by engaging in social distancing whenever possible and wearing a mask whenever social distance may be compromised. Working together is imperative and essential to meet the mission of our school during this pandemic.

Thanks for All You Do,

*Mr. Raymond J. Ankrum, Sr.*