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November 13, 2020

Dear Cleveland Hill Parent/Guardian;

As you know, Governor Cuomo has placed a majority of Erie County, including Cleveland Hill, in a yellow micro-cluster zone earlier this week. There are still more questions than answers right now, and I sincerely appreciate everyone's patience. We are actively investigating all of the information to be able to provide you the most transparent and confirmed facts. I want you to know that we are assessing our capacity and support to administer the COVID-19 testing here on campus.

As reports of issues with school testing are being more widely discussed in the news media, I feel compelled to share with you some of the facts behind that. Schools were not told to prepare an in-district testing protocol as part of our reopening plan. The first time we learned of this was in early October when Governor Cuomo unveiled his micro-cluster strategy. At that time, we were told that the Erie County Department of Health would partner with us in administering and processing these tests. We only learned this week, when we were designated a "hot spot", that the ECDOH may not be able to provide us this support, and that we may need to find another partner for this. Along with our Medical Director, HealthWorks of WNY, we are working on that now and this message is in that regard.

Over recent weeks, I have explained the implications of this to the school community. One thing that County Executive Poloncarz stated clearly, is that we must meet the mandatory testing requirements in order to have students in the building as presented by Governor Cuomo. **This mandate is on the school to attain 20% of the in-person individuals each week.** For reference, we currently have approximately 1,226 faculty, staff and students that come on to campus for in-person learning. Therefore, 20% of that total means that we need to randomly test 246 people per week. If we do not receive a high enough percentage of our in-person students and staff testing, we will need to shift the entire district to remote learning until our micro-cluster designation is lifted.

Please know that if we have to shift to remote instruction as required in a Orange or Red Zone designation, we would have to remain in remote until the designation is lifted, or until guidance changes.

I know that we have asked before, but many of you had questions and concerns that could not be addressed. Of specific concern, was the type of test that would be administered. We did not know. We were told yesterday that should we agree to implement testing here at Cleveland Hill, that we would be supplied with the BinaxNOW testing card. These tests will be administered at no cost to you. This is **NOT** the invasive test that is inserted deep into the nasal cavity. I have attached a video that demonstrates the administration of the test for your review: _

<https://youtu.be/h5dRjdLVAPM>

Please take time to consider the additional information provided above and allow your child(ren) to participate in the random COVID testing. We are still waiting for the parental consent documentation needed. We expect that in the near future and will forward that to you. At that time, we will also be providing you our specific testing plan, and asking you to give permission and consent for your child(ren) to be tested. Please note that you may give permission to one or more of your children, and decline testing for others.

I know that these are challenging times and that this decision may be a difficult one to make. Please know that we respect your right as a parent to make this decision. I know that this is a lot of information to digest. Please reach out to your building principal with any specific building level questions.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jon MacSwan
Superintendent