

Milford Central School

Reminders from Mrs. Wenck

Friday, January 28, 2022

Dear Parents, Community members, Students and Staff,

Greetings to all! I hope this email finds you well and staying warm. The past few days have been a challenge with the cold weather, and when it gets to 30 degrees it feels like we are having a heat wave! In a few days it is supposed to be close to 40 degrees. It will feel like short weather!

As you may be aware, there continue to be multiple changes regarding COVID 19 regulations from the NY State Department of Health, Governor Hochul's office and from our local Otsego County Department of Health. The most recent changes have involved the mask mandate. Earlier this week I put two different letters on the school website regarding the potential changes. As of this moment what I can share is that the mask mandate remains in place at this time. In fact, the following information was sent out to schools shortly after 2:00pm today:

*Earlier this week, the Appellate Division, Second Department issued a stay order which upheld the Department of Health's mask requirement in schools (10 NYCRR 2.60). Although the court set a hearing deadline for today, the State Education Department has confirmed that this deadline pertained only to written submissions. SED anticipates that the court will issue a further ruling in the coming weeks. **Until such time, the mask rule remains in effect.** School districts must also abide by any commitment to mask wearing contained in their publicly posted reopening plans for the 2021-2022 school year.*

In summary, until further notice, all individuals entering the school building will be required to wear masks and do so appropriately.

On a much different note, I encourage you to read the bulleted points in this newsletter. I have provided parents of students in grades PK – 5 with important information about remote instruction and am hoping to gather your thoughts on a potential merger of our athletic programs with Laurens Central School. It is my hope that you will take a few moments to reflect on the information provided and contact me, our Athletic Director, and/or Board members, with your thoughts. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Romona N. Wenck, Interim Superintendent

Important Information and Reminders

***1 Elimination of Remote Instruction for students in grades PK – 6:** Effective Monday, January 31, 2022, remote instruction for students in grades PK -5 will be replaced with paper and pen informational packets. As you are well aware, the State has reduced the Quarantine and Isolation time periods from 10 to 5 days depending on whether or not a person is symptomatic. This is good news; however, it is creating havoc with remote learning schedules, especially for children at the elementary levels. For example:

* We now have the option of testing with home kits, which the school can supply. With this option, students identified as close contacts can self-monitor over a 48-hour time period, and then return to school with two negative antigen tests. As a result, students can be out 2 days or less, depending on when the day falls during the week. Our school nurse tries to keep teachers updated, but given all of the demands associated with COVID, teachers may not know about a student being placed on quarantine until at the end of the day or the next day, or even later.

*Parents can also purchase at home tests and can choose to test on their own, or they may just choose to keep a child at home. We are finding that our nurse is not always notified when this is happening, so teachers do not know when a student is moving to remote and back.

*Teachers are struggling to keep up with the instruction in the classroom and for remote students that can be changing daily. Even if the teacher keeps their classroom set up for remote instruction, it is not as easy to switch back and forth.

*Even with remote instruction, teachers are seeing the need to have paper and pencil packets ready on a moments notice, and Unlike students at the secondary level, most elementary students are not able to get set up and work independently. This also becomes a challenge for parents.

As a result of these challenges, teachers have requested that I consider discontinuing remote instruction for elementary students, grades PK – 5. Teachers have agreed to the following in response to this request:

*Before leaving school on any given Friday, teachers will have their lesson plans for the upcoming week completed. Teachers will then create packets for each day of instruction. These packets will be labeled Monday through Friday and will follow along with the curriculum. The work will not be superfluous or generic in nature.

*These packets will be ready to go home with any student who is sent home or for parents who contact the school that their child is quarantined at home. If a child is coming to the school to pick up their child, only one trip will be needed.

*Teachers will also provide a cover letter with each packet that will provide parents with specific times during the day that they will be available to meet remotely with their students and parents.

*Students will be granted credit for attendance for every day that the packet material is completed.

In conclusion, it is our hope that this change will be helpful to everyone.

***2 Sports Merger with Laurens:** For several years now, our Track and Field program has been merged with the Laurens program. The original agreement for the merger was for three (3) years. Due to the success of the program, we have continued with the merger. This past fall, due to low participation numbers, we successfully merged our Boys Varsity Soccer Teams, and for several years, we have had students participating in the Laurens Color guard program.

At this time the Board is considering a three-year merger for all sports teams. I have been asked to develop a cost analysis for such a merger but that will be very difficult. The main costs will be for transportation, sharing of officials' fees, uniforms (if needed), coaching salaries, and equipment. When all is said and done, I do not anticipate any cost savings. Mergers do not usually provide a cost savings. We have not and are not considering a merger for financial reasons. The most important fact involving mergers is that mergers provide programs for students, which I, and the Board believes, needs to be our focus.

Before making a final decision on this, we would like to know what our parents, students and community members think about this concept. Should you have any questions, thoughts, or opinions, we would like to hear from you. Reach out to our Athletic Director, a Board member or to me.

***3 CROP Update:** Due to complications caused by COVID, the CROP starting date has been pushed back from January 31st to the first week after the February break. We will keep you posted.

***4 Chrome Books:** Starting in January, we are asking that Chrome Books assigned to elementary students be kept in school. Most teachers are using the devices in class daily. By keeping them in school there is less wear and tear on the machines, and they should always be charged. Parents should expect information about the return of the Chrome Books to come home from their children(s) teachers. Should we have to go remote, we will come up with a distribution plan.