

Eastport-South Manor Central School District

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January 5, 2021

Dear ESM Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you well. As you are all aware, the COVID-19 positivity rates in Suffolk County continue to remain at much higher levels than when we first opened our schools in September. As pointed out by Suffolk County Health Commissioner Dr. Pigott and New York State Governor Cuomo, the fall has shown us that COVID-19 spread is a community-based problem, and the spread is not occurring at the same rate in the schools.

Nonetheless, the spread of COVID-19 has implications for school operations. As per Governor Cuomo's Executive Order regarding the "[Micro-cluster Action Initiative](#)," regions with higher levels of community spread will be designated as Yellow, Orange or Red zones. With those designations, certain testing requirements exist for our schools to remain open for in-person student instruction. If our school zip codes continue to experience more days with test positivity rates like those we have seen most recently, we could be at risk of being designated as a micro-cluster. The basics of these [Testing Requirements for Public Schools](#) to remain open are:

- **Yellow Zone**

Each school must test 20% of in-person students and staff over the two-week period immediately following the announcement of a yellow zone designation. If the results of testing reveal that the positivity rate among the 20% is lower than the yellow zone's current 7-day positivity rate, testing at that school will no longer be required. In the event the results reveal that the positivity rate among in-person students and staff is higher than the zone's current 7-day positivity rate, the school must continue testing 20% of its in-person population on a bi-weekly basis.

- **Orange and Red Zones**

Schools can remain open in Orange and Red Zones. However, they must conduct testing on a monthly basis as follows:

- Orange Designation: 20% of in-person students and staff over a month
- Red Designation: 30% of in-person students and staff over a month

The testing will then need to continue on a rolling (a different 20-30 percent test group) monthly basis, until the Governor determines an area is no longer a "hot spot" and the Zone designation changes or is removed.

This is not cause for alarm, but it is time to be proactive and ready ourselves to prove that the positivity rates in Eastport-South Manor accurately depict the true circumstances in our schools. We need to work together to show that a high community positive rate is not necessarily reflective of the rates in our schools. This is what our COVID-19 test data will need to show in order to keep schools safely open for as long as we can.

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The Suffolk County School Superintendents have been working in partnership with the Suffolk County Executive's Office and the Suffolk County Department of Health Services to develop the necessary supports in the event of a Micro-cluster Zone Designation to a school district.

So that we can remain open for instruction, the goal is to have our schools prepared to administer the requisite number of COVID-19 tests to students and staff in a timely manner. This would include a **Rapid** (Abbott BinaxNOW) **Test**, administered on our campus, with our nursing staff and in partnership with the clinically trained personnel from the Suffolk County Department of Health Services. Tests would be donated to us, for free, by Suffolk County.

Our plan for testing is completely voluntary. Therefore, if you have any concerns about the testing, please know that your child is not required to participate. However, the district will need to meet the required minimum number test volunteers to proceed.

So their parents can accompany them to the test, we are also planning test times outside of the regular school day for our elementary student volunteers.

As a part of the preparatory measures, our County Executive, Steven Bellone, has asked all school districts to administer a *Willingness to Test Survey*. Therefore, we would like for every parent/guardian to complete the following survey for each child enrolled in school:

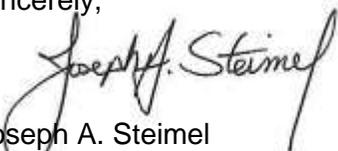
[ESM Willingness to COVID Test Survey](#)

The reason for the survey is to determine potential student participation and gauge what percentage of random testing would be attainable. If required for us to do so because of a Micro-cluster designation, I truly hope that you will consider consenting to your child being tested,

Please know that your positive answers to this survey does not bind you to your response if/when, testing begins. We do plan to send a follow-up consent form to parents if we are designated as a Micro-cluster zone.

Thank you in advance for your participation in the survey.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Steimel
Superintendent of Schools