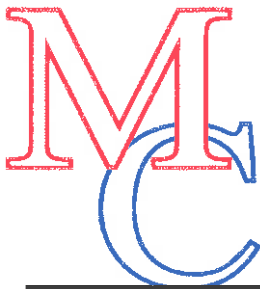


# MIDDLE COUNTRY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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*Roberta A. Gerold, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools*  
*Francine McMahon, Deputy Superintendent for Instruction*  
*Beth Rella, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Business*  
*James G. Donovan, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources*

July 29, 2021

Dear Governor Andrew M. Cuomo  
Senator Mario R. Mattera  
Senator Alexis Weik  
Assemblyman Joseph P. DeStefano  
Assemblyman Steve Englebright  
Assemblyman Douglas M. Smith

We are writing today on behalf of the Middle Country Central School District to ask for your assistance and support as we plan for the start of school in September.

Over the past year and a half, we learned a great deal as the science and best practices on controlling and mitigating the transmission of COVID evolved. We found, fairly quickly, that schools are safe centers for students and staff. It was clear that school districts are skilled at ensuring safe environments for learning. Equally clear is how responsive school districts are to guidelines and how important local control is in designing structures and responses to implementation of plans.

As a matter of fact and interest, the practices Middle Country studied and implemented throughout the past school year and this July continue to be highly effective, as evidenced by our summer programs in which pre-k through seniors are enrolled. As of this writing, we have had just one positive case and no in-district transmissions. The importance of this piece of information is that the wearing of face masks is optional for students in summer programs and we have seen no negative impact as a result of that flexibility. Had we experienced the opposite, we would have exercised our local control over masking and required universal wearing.

Middle Country, like every other school district in New York, needs to have clear direction in regard to the protocols that will be required when our school buildings re-open for instruction on September 2, 2021, just five weeks from today. We ask that you support local control over re-opening decisions, under the guidance of the New York State Department of Health. We ask that you continue to allow us local control over whether masks are optional, as long as our positive case rates remain low. We also urge you to keep the COVID-19 vaccination as an option for students, not as a mandate.

We thank you for your consideration and support as we plan for a safe re-opening of school in September.

Sincerely,

Karen J. Lessler, Ed.D.  
Board of Education President

Dawn Sharrock  
Board of Education 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President  
Chair of the Middle Country  
Legislative/Community Outreach Committee

RAG:mlcp