

# Miller Place Union Free School District

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Sunday, December 13, 2020

Dear Miller Place School District Community,

Thank you for taking the time to read this important information as I hope it finds you and your family healthy and safe. I really appreciate everything our school community has done to keep our schools safe and open for in-person student instruction. It has not been easy, in fact it has been difficult, but through our dedicated practice to our safety protocols we are approaching the end of December and have not experienced closing a school or widespread quarantining of staff or students.

The purpose of the letter is to provide you with information regarding the requirement for all New York State school districts designated in “yellow zone clusters” to conduct COVID-19 testing in order to remain open for in-person student instruction (kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, general and special education students).

Our school community, like communities across New York, are seeing an increase in positive COVID-19 cases. We agree with the Department of Health that these increases are generated from community and household events, and not from within our schools. In addition, we believe that school is the safest place for children to be on a daily basis and that the virus is not be spread within our buildings.

Several Long Island school districts have experienced an uptick in positive cases and have already been identified as yellow zones. A yellow zone designation means additional restrictions are placed on the school district in order to remain open for in-person student instruction.

Schools in a yellow zone must test 20% of students and staff, over a one-month period, in order to remain open for in-person student instruction. If the testing results show the percentage of positives is lower than the community yellow zone current rate, we can remain open without additional testing. If testing shows that results are higher than the yellow zone rate, schools may remain open, but additional testing will be required.

**Miller Place School District has not yet been determined to be in a yellow zone, but our community positivity rate continues to climb. Therefore, we must prepare for the yellow zone designation and required COVID-19 testing in order to keep our schools open for students.**

This week you will receive information from Mr. Petrie, Testing Coordinator, or me, requesting if you will permit your child to be tested (willingness and consent) with the rapid BinaxNOW testing kit, administered by Port Jefferson EMTs and/or one of our school nurses if Miller Place school community is designated as a yellow zone. **This rapid test is non-invasive and does not enter the nasal cavity.** It is a swab rapid test that circles the nostril only.

Additional information will be provided at a later date, including testing location and hours in order to allow parents, if they desire, to accompany their child for the rapid test to be performed. **At no time** will a primary or elementary school student be tested without their parent/guardian present. A parent/guardian **may permit** a middle or high school student to be tested without them being present.

It is important to note, in order to achieve the 20% testing threshold, our District has to administer **approximately 550 rapid tests**. Although testing is voluntary, I sincerely hope you will consider partnering with the District in order to accomplish this goal and allow our students to continue to attend school in-person and not fully remote.

Over the past nine months our school community has stressed the importance of our schools remaining open. This has been accomplished through the collective efforts of our parents, faculty, support staff, students, and residents. Remaining open for students allows for the best method of learning, as well as family stability by parents being able to remain employed.

Our District is doing what we can to make sure children can safely participate in in-person learning. Please continue to help us stay open for students by practicing social distancing, wearing masks, washing your hands, and avoiding large gatherings.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the required COVID-19 testing please contact Mr. Petrie, Testing Coordinator, your child's building principal or school nurse, or me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marianne F. Cartisano  
Superintendent of Schools