

WHITEHALL CENTRAL SCHOOL
87 Buckley Road
Whitehall, NY 12887

Good afternoon,

June 6, 2021

I would like to provide an update on the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; in particular the "masking" letter that was released on Friday.

As you are aware, on Friday, Dr. Zucker, the NYS Commissioner of Health, issued a letter to the Center for Disease Control, which outlined possible modifications to the current daily operating guidelines for school districts, specifically regarding the wearing of masks. While this was welcomed news, it is important to note that we have since been informed by State and Local agencies that this letter did not modify the existing guidelines, but rather offered what the modifications might entail, if the CDC provides authorization.

Earlier today, all school districts in New York State received an email from the State Education Department that clearly articulated that **school districts should continue to operate under their existing COVID procedures until further notice** and that no changes have been, or will be, made by the Governor until after Monday June 7th to afford the CDC an opportunity to respond to Dr. Zucker's letter.

However, as a county, the Washington County School Superintendents are extremely concerned for the health, wellness and safety of our students with the predicted high temperatures this week. As a result, the Washington County School Districts will allow individuals to remove their masks, while indoors, as long as there is six feet of separation. Any time students are seated at desks, students and staff may remove their masks; masks will however continue to be required for movement throughout the building as well as on busses until the time that we receive specific guidance enabling us to make changes to our protocols. We have also been informed that the masking protocols for interscholastic sports will remain unchanged. Masking will continue to be required until guidance is provided by the appropriate governing agency.

I completely understand the frustration that will be caused by this letter, however I remain hopeful that additional guidance will be issued soon. In the meantime, I continue to appreciate your patience and support as we work through this challenging time together.

Thank you!

Patrick Dee
Superintendent of Schools