

PINE PLAINS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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September 9, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing to update you on our school reopening. The first two days of school have gone well with only the usual minor first week bumps in the road.

There is an issue with the Healthy Kids Program meeting the needs of our parents. We are working with them to try to get this resolved.

There are new requirements from the New York State Department of Health. As we have said in previous messages all students, staff and visitors must have masks in place while indoors and on the buses. Masks are optional outdoors.

Another new requirement is that all staff members have to be tested at least once per week for COVID. A staff member may choose to opt-out of the testing by providing the district with proof of vaccination.

The school district is also required to *offer* tests to students whose parents furnish consent. The testing program will be administered by Dutchess County at no cost to the district or the parents. The testing program is expected to be operational around October 1st.

I have arranged for a vaccination clinic to be held Sunday, September 19th from 10:00 am until 11:30 am in the high school gymnasium. The clinic will offer the following vaccines:

- Pfizer – A two shot series for anyone 12 years and older. Anyone 12 to 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent.
- Moderna – A two shot series for anyone ages 18 and older.
- Johnson and Johnson – A one shot vaccination for anyone 18 years of age and older.

There is no cost to the participant for this clinic and it is open to students, staff and community members. The following is the link for the clinic: drneal.co/pineplains

The rate of infection across the country, New York State and in Dutchess County has increased substantially. The latest statistic on new cases per 100,000 people in Dutchess is 193. Anything over 100 for that statistic puts the County in a high infection zone. It is clear that COVID and the new variants are not going away anytime soon. Masks, distancing and other measures are really stop gaps. We will be dealing with these issues until we are able to get the greatest majority of the population vaccinated. While the vaccines do not eliminate the risk of infection, they substantially reduce that risk and almost eliminate the incidence of hospitalization.

One other issue, that of drinking water. NY State has strengthened the requirements for drinking water to be essentially lead free. Because of that and COVID we have disabled our drinking fountains. Students are able to use bottle fillers to refill reusable water bottles. We believe that it is important for students to have water available to them at their desks. In order to have time for parents to supply their student with a refillable bottle, we have made bottled water available to students for the first two weeks of school.

Once again, be well and stay safe.

Dr. Martin D. Handler
Superintendent