

# Sayville Public Schools



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Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

June 4, 2021

Dear Governor Cuomo,

In August, public school districts were asked to put together safe and effective reopening strategies that met the needs and comfort levels of the individual communities they serve. Those reopening guidelines have been followed to the letter for more than 9 months. Since that time, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New York State Department of Health have loosened as transmission rates declined and vaccination rates increased. However, somehow, restrictions on schools have remained stagnant. As we have seen time and time again throughout the pandemic, stopping the spread needs to be handled locally; there is no one blanket solution. That is why we ask you to enable individual school district to again work with our local health agencies and make plans that work for the communities we serve. We recognize that these are still unprecedented times, but we cannot allow inertia to be the basis for how decisions are made regarding our students physical and mental health.

Each measure school districts have taken has been made with close consultation from health officials and with the input from our community, and they are working. COVID-19 is not spreading in schools. Positivity rates are low. What works for New York City does not apply to Long Island that same way that what works for Buffalo does not work for Syracuse. We ask that you give control back to the school district. Let our board of education, which has been rightfully elected by our residents to represent them in school district matters, make the decisions that are in line with our community's desires and best interests.

If summer day camps can operate without mandating that campers wear face coverings, then why are schools not given the same ability to extend mask breaks while students are socially distant or outdoors – many public schools will be operating summer camps in just a few short weeks. Our community is looking at schools to adapt accordingly to health guidelines, but we are handcuffed by unchanging regulations that only apply to schools.

Approximately 27 states no longer require universal mask wearing for students within the classroom setting. With the increase in warmer weather, coupled with not giving parent's choices regarding students wearing masks, that have begun to keep their children home due to mounting health and safety concerns. This is indirect contradiction to our mutual goal of keeping students in-school, full-time. In addition, student discipline and defiance is expected to increase for special and general education students, which may result in necessary disciplinary action. With the ability to make decisions locally, schools can work with local health officials and our community to make responsible, informed, science-based decisions that will keep students safe and maintain a healthy learning environment.

As elected public school officials, it is our obligation to serve our community. However, the way these restrictions are being enforced, our community and our students are the ones who bear the brunt of the burden. With the support and guidance from our local health officials who analyze the data where our families reside, please give public school districts back the power to operate according to the needs of the community we serve.

Respectfully,

 John Stimmel

Sayville Board of Education and Dr. John Stimmel, Superintendent of Schools