



UTICA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Utica City School District Parents, Faculty and Staff,

I am writing to update all of our parents, faculty and staff on the reopening of school for the 2021-2022 school year. On Tuesday, August 24, 2021, the Utica City School District Board of Education unanimously approved the school district's 2021-2022 Reopening Plan for full time in-person instruction and full participation in sports and extracurricular activities. The reopening plan, along with the school district's fall sports plan, is available on the school district's website.

Over the past year and a half, school districts across the country and here at home have faced numerous challenges as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Although COVID-19 continues to pose challenges for all of us, the Utica City School District is prepared to open the 2021-2022 school year with all students returning to the classroom for daily full time in-person instruction on September 7, 2021 while at the same time, implementing strategies to provide for the safety and well-being of our teachers, staff, students, parents and their families, based on the important guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department and Oneida County.

The Utica City School District designed its reopening plan based on a careful review of this guidance along with stakeholder input from principals, teachers, parents, secretaries, teacher assistants, representatives from our pupil transportation company, etc. In addition, the school district launched an electronic survey which was sent out to parents on all of the school district's communication platforms including the school district's website, individual school websites, the Utica City School District Facebook page, the Utica City School District app, the Utica City School District TV YouTube Channel, and Channel 3. A School Messenger robo-call was sent to over 10,000 student households to notify parents of the survey and how to access the survey. The survey was also published in multiple home languages. The survey asked respondents whether or not they supported full time in-person instruction, the masking of staff and students, and obtaining vaccinations, all of which are key components from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, and Oneida County guidance. Based on the survey results, which were presented to the Board and to the public during the August 24th Board of Education meeting, the majority of our parents are in support of full time in-person instruction for students and the wearing of face coverings in schools.

As mentioned, in accordance with the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, and Oneida County, the Utica City School District will open to full time in-person instruction for all students on Tuesday, September 7, 2021. A remote learning option will only be implemented in the case of a governmental emergency declaration closing schools (i.e. from the health department), or in the cases of long-term quarantine or isolation of an entire class or school building. Chrome Books and mobile Wi-Fi devices will be provided to students during these instances. Parents who wish to pursue homeschooling for their child or medical homebound instruction due to a serious

underlying medical condition must apply to the office of Pre-K and Student Services by submitting a letter along with a medical note from their child's physician. The office of Pre-K and Student Services will review and approve such applications on a case by case basis.

In order to provide for the safety and well-being of all staff and students, the Utica City School District is requiring that all students, teachers, staff and visitors wear a face covering which covers both the nose and mouth regardless of vaccination status and community transmission levels as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department and Oneida County. Most recently, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul ordered universal masking in all school buildings. In addition, the Utica City School District will also implement COVID-19 health and safety strategies outlined in our reopening plan which include: promoting vaccinations, consistent and correct use of masks, physical distancing, screening/testing to quickly identify cases, improving ventilation, proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, and routine cleaning with disinfection.

I want to reassure every parent, student, teacher, and staff member that the Utica City School District is committed to opening the 2021-2022 school year to full time in-person instruction in the safest manner possible through the application of the guidance provided to school districts from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, Oneida County, and the new Governor. We will evaluate any new guidance from these agencies as conditions evolve and make any necessary adjustments.

In closing, I would once again like to thank each and every one of our parents for their support and understanding throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, along with our teachers and staff for their hard work during what has certainly been a very difficult time for all of us. I hope that you have an opportunity to enjoy the last few days of summer and we look forward to the return of staff and students for the 2021-2022 school year.

Sincerely,



Bruce J. Karam,
Superintendent of Schools