



**CHITTENANGO CENTRAL SCHOOLS**  
**Michael R. Eiffe, Superintendent**  
**1732 Fyler Road, Chittenango, NY 13037**  
**Telephone: 315-687-2840—Fax: 315-687-2841**

March 17, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this communication finds you and your family well. Please review the enclosed for important updates on several key pieces of information.

Although we are not yet out of the tunnel and remain vigilant in upholding safety as our greatest responsibility, the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter. In our efforts to stay safety focused and committed to offering high quality academic and extra-curricular opportunities for our students, it is important to recognize our collective teamwork to date. We remain one of the only school districts in the greater CNY region to operate both in-person and virtual learning every available day since September 8 (and one of very few in the state to conduct an in-person special education program in the summer of 2020). Further, we are one of the only districts in the greater CNY region to offer a wide variety of in-person student activities since September including, but not limited to, athletics, music, clubs and theatre (and one of very few in the state to conduct both an in-person Fall Play and Spring Musical at CHS).

To my knowledge, Chittenango CSD is the only school system to raise nearly \$60,000 to support friends and neighbors experiencing job loss and financial hardship. This is nothing short of remarkable. While operating a school system in a pandemic environment presents daily adversity, we endure each challenge because we are Bears. As Bears, we are part of something truly special in Bear Country.

In recent media coverage and statements made by politicians of all levels, returning students to school has been of significant focus. As such, you may have seen reports of local schools increasing daily in-person student attendance. These movements to increase in-person student attendance shift their learning models closer to or at the level we have been since September. As you know, our learning model maximized in-person student attendance, based upon 6 ft. social distancing with masks for all. Neighboring Onondaga County has recently announced support for reducing 6 ft. social distancing requirements to 3 ft., with the application of a "barrier" supplied by Onondaga County. This measure will further increase the availability of in-person learning allowing for Onondaga County districts to have more students in classrooms.

Upon the request of several Madison County school districts, including the Chittenango CSD, the Madison County Department of Health (MCDOH) advises that the Madison County Board of Health (MCBOH) intends to review the issue of social distancing at their next regularly scheduled meeting. Our collective goal is clear, to safely increase in-person learning opportunities for all students. Further, it is important to note that Dr. Fauci recently announced the CDC is analyzing data that could change distancing guidelines in schools from 6 ft. to 3 ft. Based upon new data and recent studies, namely one conducted by the [Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center \(BIDMC\)](#) in Massachusetts Public Schools, it is possible we could see a reduction in social distancing guidance with no application of a "barrier" other than a mask. The BIDMC study found "no substantial difference" in the number of cases in school districts that implemented a 3-foot distancing policy among students versus a 6-foot policy.

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Chittenango Middle School  
Arnold Merola, Principal  
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Bolivar Road Elementary  
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315-687-2880-Fax: 315-687-2881

Bridgeport Elementary  
Melissa Stanek, Principal  
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This new data, when combined with data collected and analyzed for nearly a year demonstrating that schools are not sources of Covid spread, is promising for a return to in-person learning models. As we await the analysis of the CDC and subsequent necessary approval of the NYSDOH and MCBOH, the District continues to be prepared to adjust our learning model based upon not only updated guidance but also our re-opening principles of **Consistency, Choice and Safety**. Indeed, as done previously, the District will seek the valued feedback of our parents/guardians, staff and students via multiple comprehensive surveys. The opportunity to provide feedback and have parent/guardian choice in evolving learning models is an important aspect of our Bear Country collaboration. Surveys will be distributed via School Messenger, Peachjar and the District website, in the near future.

The Chittenango Schools community is built upon collaboration, supporting your neighbor and a commitment to the "WE" of Bear Country. We will continue to stand together, support one another and persevere as a community.

On behalf of our exceptional Board of Education and Administrative Team, thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eiffe", written over the printed name.

Mr. Michael Eiffe  
Superintendent of Schools