



## Skaneateles Central School District

Nationally Recognized for Excellence  
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Dear Skaneateles family,

In response to concern and confusion regarding return to school protocols for students, I am reaching out with additional information. The guidance provided from the State Department of Health that we are required to follow can be found here [guidance doc](#). Much of the issue regarding return to school protocols began with the “return to school” paragraph found on page 3. There it describes the following:

*This return to school protocol shall include, at minimum, documentation from a health care provider following evaluation, negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result, and symptom resolution, or if COVID-19 positive, release from isolation.*

According to this guidance as written, any child kept home sick or sent home from school sick who is experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms must produce a note from their healthcare provider **and** be given a COVID-19 test with a negative result before they are permitted to return to school. [CDC COVID-19 symptoms resources](#)

We recognize the complexity and inconvenience this causes for our families and sought clarity with local leaders and Department of Health officials who confirmed that both the note from the healthcare provider and the negative test are in fact required at this time. It is important for you to understand that these are not our ideas or our opinions but guidance we are legally mandated to follow. Working with State Departments of Health, we proposed language changes that would allow for individual physician input to be considered as so many of the reported symptoms will have nothing necessarily to do with COVID-19. New regulations have been written and submitted by a consortium of County Health Department leaders from across the State and have been under review at the Governor’s office for weeks now with no changes in sight. Our School Superintendent advocacy group [NYSCOSS](#) released the following statement in response to the problems these regulations as written pose for schools and families:

*As you know, the [NYSDOH master guidance](#) on reopening required schools to establish procedures for staff and students to return to in-person learning if screening positive for COVID-19 symptoms. One of those requirements is a negative COVID-19 test. Throughout the summer, leaders have raised this as a significant concern especially considering the length of time individuals have to wait to receive test results. The overriding concern is the fact that because so many COVID-19 symptoms overlap with ordinary and annual illnesses this requirement will send students home for longer than necessary and potentially lead to so many staff absences that school are forced to go remote. The Council, alongside county health department directors, have been urging NYSDOH to reform this requirement in a manner that protects community health AND is realistic and scientifically based. It is our understanding that high-level conversations are ongoing within NYSDOH and a change may be released shortly, but we cannot guarantee that will occur - we inquired about this possibility back on August 14.*

While we recognize that COVID-19 symptoms look a lot like every other cold, flu, and allergy symptom typical of the fall and winter in Central New York, we are also trying to use some common sense to eliminate unnecessary problems.

- If your child is experiencing any COVID-19 related symptoms please keep them home from school. If they are sent home while experiencing COVID-19 symptoms they will need to produce a note from your healthcare provider and a negative COVID-19 test to reenter until such time as regulations are amended.
- If you are keeping your child home for other reasons than COVID-19 related symptoms please let us know. For example, if there are dentist or orthopedic appointments, please let us know that those are normal health appointments and not necessarily sick days associated with COVID-19. You will not be required to produce a note or negative COVID-19 test in these circumstances.

While we will work with you to avoid any confusion caused by these regulations, we will continue to act in compliance with regulations and make decisions every day out of an abundance of caution for the safety of your children, our faculty, and our staff. It will only take a single infection to shut down an entire building and possibly the entire district so we are very truly all in this together.

If you would like to assist us in our advocacy efforts or contact the Governor's office or our local health departments directly, please use the following information.

Onondaga County                      Health Department      <http://www.ongov.net/health/>

Cayuga County                        Health Department      <https://www.cayugacounty.us/153/Health-Department>

Governor Cuomo's Office      [\(518\) 474-8390](tel:(518)474-8390)      <http://www.governor.ny.gov/contact>

Thank you for your patience as we navigate these challenges together.

Stronger together,



Eric Knuth  
Superintendent of Schools