

February 10, 2022

Dear Parents, Students and Employees,

We caught a break yesterday when temperatures climbed to 51 degrees in downtown Dansville! There was more energy in the air than usual for a Wednesday in February but winter returns this weekend so we have to enjoy it when we can. Here are this week's updates.

COVID-19 Update. Regional, local and school based positives and positivity rates have dropped dramatically. Our 10 day positivity rate remains 6%. Here are our latest numbers.

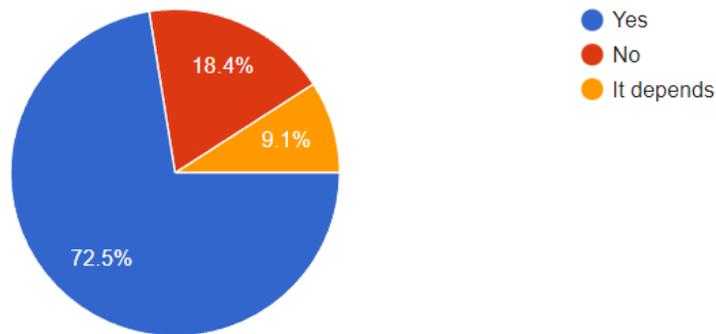
2/9/22	DPS	EBH ES	DHS	District	Totals
Quarantined Students	6	6	14	NA	26
Quarantined Employees	1	0	0	0	1
COVID-19 Positive Students	2	3	7	NA	12
COVID-19 Positive Employees	1	0	0	0	1

Possible Changes in Masking. Our School Board and I believe that now is the time for the Governor to restore local control to school districts and set clear guidelines for when the mask mandate will be lifted in schools. We are advocating for action by writing to Governor Hochul, our legislative leaders and our partners at NYSSBA and NYSCOSS. I expect new guidance to be released during or just after the February break which begins at the end of next week and I believe that masks will become optional soon after the break. When the new guidance is issued, I will immediately provide an update.

Last week I conducted a survey of parents, employees and high school students; 712 responses were collected in two days. A pie chart summarizing the responses is provided on the next page.

If permitted by NYS, should DCSD make masks optional for students and employees but strongly recommended?

712 responses



There are many who believe that unmasking is long overdue and others who want to ensure that protections remain in place.

When masks become optional at DCS, we will maintain other mitigation strategies. Students with symptoms will have to wait until they are well before returning to school. Temperature screenings upon entry of buses and schools are quick, easy and will continue. Hand sanitizer stations will remain available throughout each school. We will continue to offer testing and free test kits to families.

Importantly, the District is preemptively planning strategies, communications and lessons to teach students to protect those who choose to continue wearing a mask from teasing and bullying.

In the meantime, you may [use this link to advocate for local autonomy and clear guidance on the end of school mandates](#). I suggest that you select Governor Kathy Hochul and Lt. Governor Brian Benjamin. A brief sample letter is available below. Just copy, paste and submit.

Local Control for Dansville Schools

We respectfully request for you and the NYSDOH to develop appropriate guidance for an exit strategy regarding all mitigation measures, but not mandates; and we request for local control to be fully restored to our school districts to enable us to make decisions appropriate for our individual communities, in consultation with our local DOH.

Free COVID Test Kits. Parents may pick up free test kits on any school day between 8:00am and 3:30pm from any school office. We are discontinuing drive through distribution. Please visit your child's school office for free kits. As you might imagine, there's a surplus now that the spike in cases has subsided. Please stop in for your free test kits.

Testing. We are distributing hundreds of tests to parents for home use. When a child who had symptoms tests negative at home, our testing technicians or school nurses will confirm the negative with a clinical test at school. This is necessary for re-entry.

School Budget Advocacy. We are at it again, fighting for equity in education funding for Dansville school children. DCSD is a high needs rural district. While wealthy suburban districts are receiving big increases in Foundation Aid for next year, DCSD is getting 3% which does not even keep up with cost of living escalation. Did you know that aid to Dansville Schools is based upon 2000 census data? Back then, our community was considered "average needs." Dansville has been classified as a "high needs" community for many years now but the formula hasn't changed and we are not receiving a fair portion of the state aid.

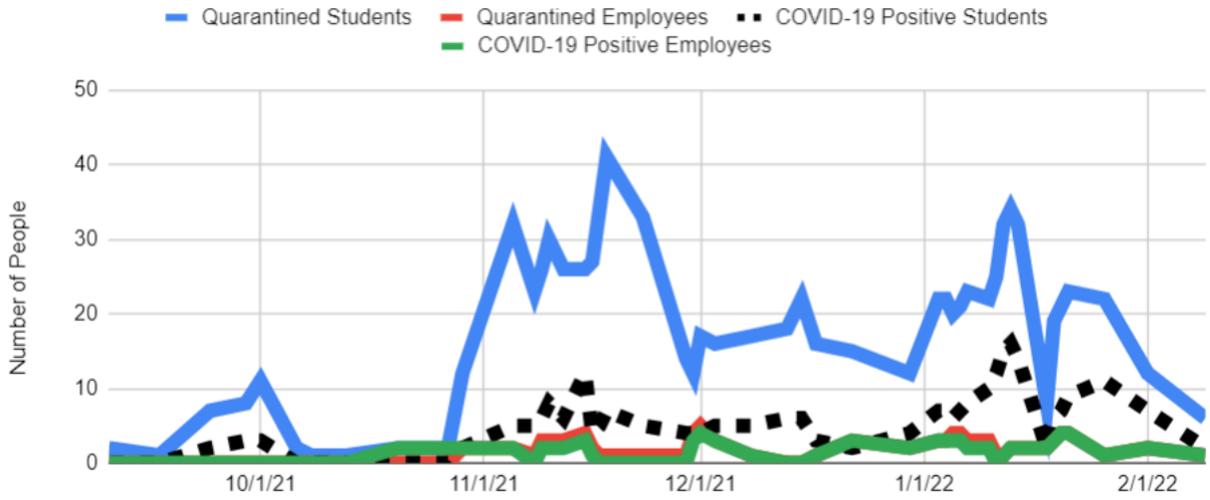
[Please follow this link to send an advocacy letter to our elected officials.](#) Select Governor Kathy Hochul, Lt. Governor Brian Benjamin, Senator George Borrello and Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes to receive your message. Enter "Fiscal Equity for Dansville School Children" in the subject line. A sample letter is included at the end of this update for you to copy and paste or, if you are so inclined, write your own. They need to hear from you and we need your help. Thank you.

Sincerely,

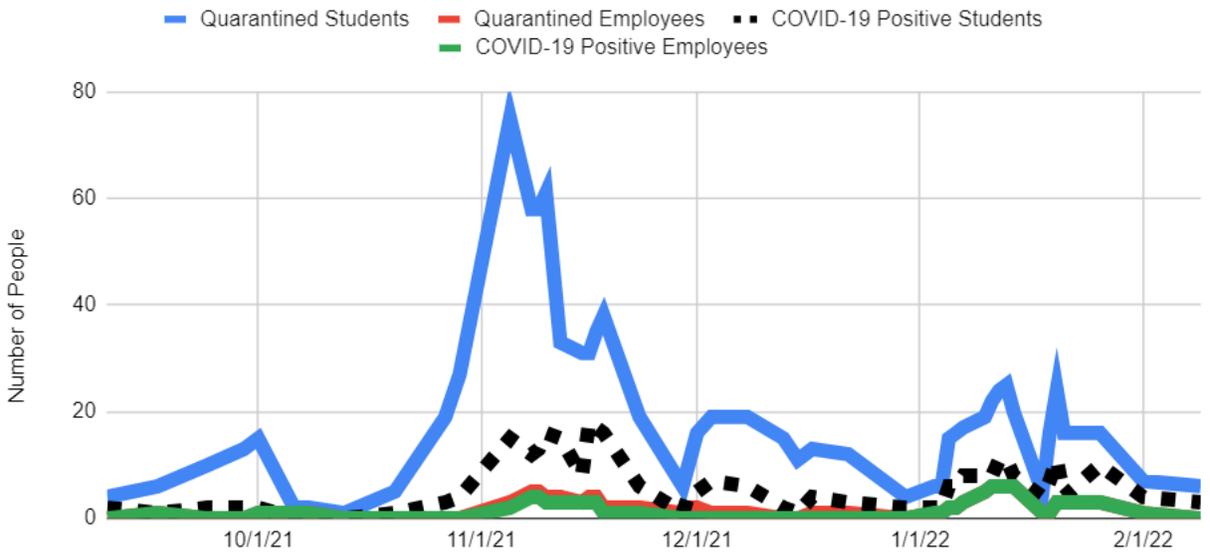
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul J. Alioto". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul J. Alioto
Superintendent of Schools

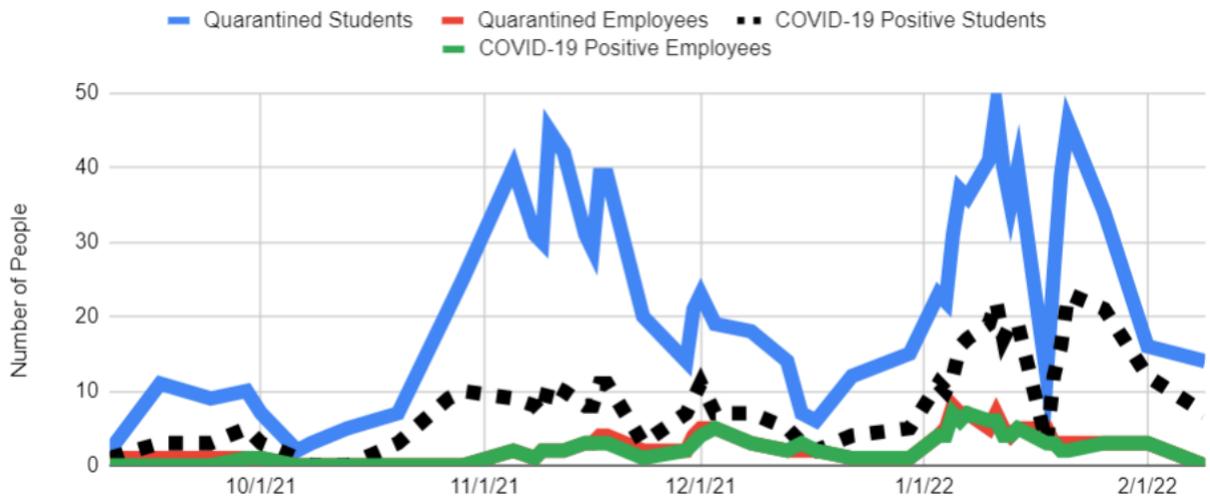
Dansville Primary School



EBH Elementary School



Dansville High School



Fiscal Equity for Dansville Schools

The purpose of this message is to make you aware that the executive budget proposal fails small rural school districts like Dansville CSD.

The executive budget for P12 education is not based on equity or inclusivity and we need powerful voices like yours to advocate for education funding equity in NYS. What school communities are left out? Those serving high needs rural populations like Dansville.

To provide for a sound basic education in 2021-22, we had to rely on additional funding from Washington because we don't receive adequate funding from Albany.

While many districts are using these funds to bolster reserves, others like Dansville are using promised funds to maintain quality programs for students and preserve a sound basic education.

Fast forward to 2022-23 budget planning and double digit percentage increases in Foundation Aid for wealthy school districts. While these districts with a robust tax base are building reserves in anticipation of future capital projects and tax cuts, we are straining to make ends meet in our budget for next year.

The executive budget proposal was a step in the right direction but Dansville CSD was left out in the cold with a \$480,000 increase inclusive of what the State owed the District. This doesn't even keep up with COLA. DCSD would have received an additional \$430,000 if the Foundation Aid owed was added to the minimum 3% increase. How much more in compounding aid have we lost due to the 17 year delay in fully funding Foundation Aid?

The estimated increases in DCSD's health insurance, FICA and TRS for 2022-23 is \$1.5M. We have little control over those costs. 2% on the tax levy generates only \$185,000 and our community has grown weary of tax increases every year. Quick math informs us that the Foundation Aid increase and local capacity cannot meet expense driven needs and we will face a serious budget gap if the State doesn't provide our fair share of Foundation Aid.

Please refrain from referring to schools as "flush with money" and call out those who make such misguided and inaccurate assertions. Inequity remains and it can be found in communities that provide milk, wheat, soy beans, corn and potatoes to the rest of the State.

Please think of Dansville and other high need rural districts in your work until we can finally agree that equity in education funding has been achieved for all of New York's children.