



DeRuyter Central School

Home of the Rockets

711 Railroad Street, DeRuyter, NY 13052
Phone: 315-852-3400 Fax: 315-852-9600

Kimberly O'Brien
Director of Curriculum and
Instruction

David M. Brown, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Amanda Graham-Quirk
School Business Executive

Stephen Rafferty
6-12 Principal/Director
of Special Education

Jenny Valente
PK-5 Principal/Director
of Special Education

Friday, August 24, 2021

Dear Staff and Community,

I am overjoyed to welcome you to the 2021-2022 school year and do it with excitement *but* with caution. We have been through so much these past 18 months and I was hoping for normalcy as we open our school year. There are some realities we are facing right now with the Coronavirus and specifically the Delta Variant. Whatever is shared in this letter, the one thing I do know is we will be opening our doors on Tuesday, September 7th for all of our students, and our first day with the staff is Tuesday, August 31st starting at 10 am.

We will be having an Ice-Cream Social on Tuesday August 31st from 4:00 pm until 6:00 pm. We will have supplies available to families, ice-cream, as well as booths from community and school based programs, like our Sports or Arts Boosters. Masks will need to be worn while inside getting supplies but can be taken off outdoors.

Did you know that there is a Health Center in our building? The Family Health Network has a Physician or Physician's Assistant in the district two days a week and a dentist twice a year at no cost to the family. This is a grant-funded program and is open to EVERY child/family in the district. Our participation rate is lower than desired and we are trying to increase the participation to make sure this opportunity can continue. If you would like further information, or a registration packet, please reach out to our Elementary Principal, Mrs. Valente.

Throughout the pandemic DeRuyter has pulled together to meet the needs of our students and school community. When schools were closed by state officials in March 2020, DeRuyter quickly shifted gears to remote learning. Our food service and transportation departments worked together to deliver meals and learning materials to families. Also, our teachers, teaching assistants/aides, school counselors, psychologist, administrators, and clerical staff worked tirelessly to meet our students' needs. We were learning and adjusting alongside our children.

As of last week the order came through mandating all schools enforce masking inside the buildings. We will continue to offer mask breaks with time of breaks still to be determined and will share that with students in each class. Our priority is to keep our children in our buildings. The spread of the virus has been increasing and to avoid extensive quarantining, we need to use this process. When students and staff are outside, masks are not required. As things change, and I hope they do, we will continue to monitor and adjust and I look forward to the day I can say, "we no longer need to wear masks." Any student or staff member **can** wear a mask at all times if they choose.

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DeRuyter Central School = District Committed to Success

Board of Education: Dean Hathaway, President; Bradley Mierke, Vice President; Members – Daniel Degear, Jodi Wiesing, Jeremy Wilken

We will no longer be taking the temperatures of our children or filling out daily attestations. However, I implore you to keep your children home when they are not feeling well. The ability to keep our District open and decrease the spread of all diseases is by keeping your children home when they are sick. At the time of this printing, there has not been any guidance on whether students and staff will need a negative COVID test in order to return to school when they are out ill.

This year, there is not an option for Remote Learning but if and when we do need to quarantine students and/or staff, we are working on the process for children to continue their learning. More information will be coming from each of the individual teachers.

Last year the District provided two vaccine clinics. One was in Cortland and one was in our district. If, and when we can provide additional clinics, we will announce this to our community. When the Health Departments announce the availability of the vaccine to children under 12 we will work to offer a clinic in our school district.

I understand and acknowledge that we are all at different places with regard to the use of masks, vaccinations, and other mitigations. My feelings and opinions on all of this are moot. As an educational leader, I must forgo my thoughts and follow the guidelines handed to me from the State Health Department and the State Education Department. I am happy and willing to discuss any of this with any of you.

We will continue to ask that visitors not come to the school and parents not walk their children to classes like we did pre-pandemic. We hope to get back to normalcy before the end of this school year. If you do need to enter the building because you have been invited to meet with a teacher or principal, you must have a mask on and we ask that masks cover your nose and mouth. Again, thank you for understanding. When we can, we will reduce these restrictions.

I promised over three years ago that I would be honest and transparent and you are getting my true self in this letter. As I said earlier, my feelings or opinions are not part of this decision making as it relates to the health and welfare of staff and students. My responsibility is to keep our doors open, reduce quarantining and the spread of the virus, and educate our children.

I know we will get through all of this but also know it can only happen when we work together. Please reach out to me to discuss any of this.

Thank you.



Dr. David M. Brown
Superintendent of Schools