

GARDEN CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Inspiring Minds
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August 3, 2021

The Honorable Kevin Thomas
New York State Senate
900 Stewart Avenue, Suite LL45A
Garden City, New York 11530

Re: Guidelines for the Schools Reopening in September

Dear Senator Thomas:

The Board of Education of the Garden City Union Free School District writes this letter on behalf of the Garden City Community and in furtherance of its goal toward maintaining local control in connection with the means and measures by which the District manages the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we enter the month of August, school districts around the state are planning for their school openings in September. A large part of that planning this year, as it was the prior year, surrounds the COVID-19 pandemic and what, if any, safety protocols districts must have in place. What made the 2020-2021 school year difficult, in large part, were the onerous, and often ill-timed, demands of the State's constantly changing COVID-19 guidance for K-12 schools. Statements by the Governor, in particular, often preceded his executive orders or State Department of Health guidance by several days and the final issued orders rarely matched his statements, creating chaos and confusion in our communities. We simply cannot endure that type of madness for another school year.

We respectfully request that the Governor and the State legislature cease their practice of issuing mandatory guidance for school districts. By virtue of the cessation of the Governor's emergency order, neither the Governor nor the State Department of Health on their own, have the legal authority to issue mandatory guidance at this time. But, on behalf of the Garden City Union Free School District, we ask that whether another emergency order is declared, or the State Legislature deigns to step in and pass legislation, that matters of safety protocols and school safety be left to local decision-making authority, to wit, each individual school district. The needs, beliefs, and values of each school district are as varied and diverse as the communities. Thus, each individual school district is best positioned to determine what steps need to be taken to ensure a safe, happy and exciting return to school in September.

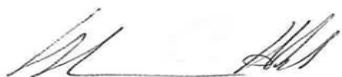
We recognize that the infection rate state-wide has climbed in recent weeks and the Delta variant continues to pose a threat. In light of the potential need for districts to impose safety protocols for September, we request that you issue an unequivocal statement that the state will continue to relinquish decision-making authority on matters of COVID-19 safety protocols to individual school districts.

As the Board of Education of the Garden City Union Free School District, we take our responsibilities toward the Garden City Community, our students and staff, very seriously. We intend to work with the County Executive, in consultation with other county agencies, as appropriate, to manage this and any other public health situation that may arise. The diverse communities of this great state deserve local control.

We eagerly await your response and hope we are able to work together in continuing to help our community move past this pandemic.

Respectfully,

The Board of Education of the Garden City Union Free School District



William Holub
President



Stefanie Granville
Vice President



Michael Cassaro
Trustee



Matthew Wakeham
Trustee