



For Immediate Release

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WNY EDUCATION ALLIANCE CALLS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF QUARANTINES FOR HEALTHY STUDENTS

(Buffalo, NY – October 28, 2021) Prior to the start of the school year, WNY Education Alliance launched **#The 180 Day Project** to raise awareness of the need to ensure that all students in Western New York had the opportunity to attend school in person for 180 days this year.

The campaign has taken on increased importance given the significant damage that was previously done to students by the unnecessary closing of schools. Studies have shown that school closures over the last two school years have had a very negative effect on the educational, social, and emotional development of many school-aged children, and, at the same time, have done very little to slow the spread of Covid-19.

With schools now open, the primary issue impacting in-person education continues to be the unnecessary quarantining of healthy students in schools. Like the flawed school closures before it, the quarantining of close contacts in schools is creating significant disruptions for students and families in Western New York while doing little to reduce transmission rates of the virus.

Studies have shown that less than 1-2% of those students that are quarantined as close contacts in schools have subsequently tested positive for Covid-19. Superintendents in Erie and Niagara Counties recently confirmed that of the 2,500 students that have already been quarantined in the first 6 weeks of the school year, only about 1.5% have tested positive.

In less than 6 weeks, over 2,450 healthy students in just 30 school districts in Western New York have been quarantined for no reason. Assuming an average quarantine period of 5-7 days, this means that quarantines have resulted in roughly 15,000 lost student school days in less than 6 weeks for children that were not infected with Covid-19.

This is completely unacceptable.

Our public health experts are failing our children once again.



What makes this outdated quarantine policy even more egregious is the fact that rapid tests can now be used to determine precisely if any close contacts have Covid-19; we no longer need to guess based on proximity. Whereas quarantines are only 1-2% effective, rapid tests are 98-99% effective in identifying infectious cases.

As a result, many states in the U.S. and many countries in Europe are now using “test-to-stay” and “test-to-play” programs to allow healthy students to continue to attend school and participate in extracurricular activities since rapid tests are more effective. For instance, Massachusetts estimates that its test-to-stay program has already saved 48,547 school days this year.

New York has been one of the states that has continued to quarantine close contacts in schools with no scientific justification. Yesterday, in response to growing pressure on the issue, the NYSDOH hastily revised its guidance to allow local health departments to use test-to-stay (“TTS”) programs for close contacts in schools in lieu of quarantines.

Nonetheless, the NYSDOH was quick to point out that it “does not recommend TTS.” Furthermore, the NYSDOH does not allow test-to-stay programs to be used for extracurricular activities or anything outside of school. In other words, asymptomatic close contacts in schools who test negative for Covid-19 are still required to quarantine when they are not in school.

If tests are more accurate and less harmful than arbitrary quarantines, why do our unelected health officials insist on quarantining unvaccinated close contacts in schools? The only possible explanation is that our public health experts are using their quarantine powers not to prevent transmission of the virus, but rather to push more families to get their children vaccinated. While Western New York Education Alliance believes that vaccines are highly effective, it does not support the unfair quarantining of healthy students in any setting, for any reason.

Western New York Education Alliance is calling on the CDC and state and local leaders to work together to replace the outdated and inequitable quarantine policy with test-to-stay and test-to-play programs to allow healthy students to continue to live their lives.

Children cannot afford to have another year of disruptions for no scientific reason.



The data from the first 6 weeks of the school year confirms our initial fears: that quarantines would replace arbitrary school closures and prevent students from receiving the important educational, social, and emotional benefits associated with attending school and participating in extracurricular activities.

It is time to end this inhumane practice.

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WNY Education Alliance

WNY Education Alliance is a non-partisan organization committed to improving education in the Western New York area through advocacy, community engagement, and strategic partnerships.