



West Seneca Central School District

Administrative Offices · 675 Potters Road · West Seneca, New York 14224

Telephone: 716-677-3100 · Facsimile: 716-677-3104

March 18, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Gov. Cuomo,

Music is important to the West Seneca Central School District. While navigating state restrictions for reopening, we became aware of how respectful and understanding our students can be – always wearing masks when necessary and avoiding interaction when it is not safe. They have been patient, and their patience is costing them valuable learning opportunities.

As a large district we cannot overcome the logistics of spacing students to meet safety mandates, particularly in the area of music, one of the core subjects as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The 12 foot spacing was implemented due to concerns about additional spread of aerosols through more forceful breathing, either by singing or playing an instrument. Since that time, there has been additional knowledge gained about the spread of aerosols through instruments.

Most wind instruments collect a significant percentage of aerosols inside the instrument, and for the aerosols that do escape, masks have been developed to allow vocalists and instrumentalists to play with little impediment. For aerosols that may continue out of the instrument, there now are secondary masks designed to go over all types of instrument air discharge points.

Our music department has purchased masks for every vocalist at the middle and high school levels, and bell covers and musician masks for each band student in all grade levels.

With the new PPE available, the concerns that lead to the 12 foot spacing are no longer valid. The current standard six-foot spacing is more appropriate.

In our high schools alone, the 12-foot mandate means that only a fraction of our students can practice in the auditorium together, a quarter of our chorus students and one third of our band students. At a six-foot requirement, we could increase the number to 72 percent for chorus, and include all band students in the auditorium.

New York State's guidance for musicians needs to reduce the separation distance. This change can't happen soon enough.



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We respectfully ask for these restrictions to be lifted so our students may reach their full potential.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

West Seneca Central School District

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Music Department

Nora Murnane-Robertson, District Music Coordinator

Cc: Betty A. Rosa
Commissioner of Education
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12234

West Seneca was named one of the 2020 Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation, marking the seventh time and fourth consecutive year the West Seneca Music Department received this designation.