

December 4, 2020

Dear WCASD Community,

Effective November 25, 2020, the PA Department of Health (PA DOH) has ordered all public districts that choose to offer an in-person option to comply with new rules concerning (a) face coverings and (b) compulsory school closing directives that depend on school-specific COVID-19 data. **Assuming this guidance doesn't change, when our schools resume the hybrid learning model on Monday, December 14, we are now required to follow this direction.**

### How do these requirements impact WCASD?

1. **Face Coverings:** The PA DOH order regarding universal face coverings, effective November 18, is already in place at WCASD. This order requires that everyone must wear a face covering when indoors, irrespective of physical distance. Mask breaks are still permitted as long as six feet of social distancing is achieved.
2. **Compulsory School Closings:** This is a new requirement. Rather than closing an entire school district, we will now be required to evaluate positive case counts by each individual school. The limits for the number of positive cases allowed before closing a school is based on school size and a chart at the end of this letter provides that data. Case counts take place over a 14-day period. Once closed, the DOH requires a school to conduct disinfecting and contact tracing before it can reopen.

For example, if East Bradford Elementary reported 4 positive cases of Covid-19 during a 14-day period, and Hillsdale reported only 2 cases during that same 14-day period, East Bradford would be required to close for 3-7 days, while Hillsdale could remain open. The DOH requirement allows schools to reopen once disinfecting has been completed, and contact tracing has been completed for that school.

We anticipate that any closures at WCASD will be of relatively limited duration due to the protocols we already have in place to meet remediation requirements. WCASD disinfects every school every night, and we have been able to finish contact tracing for most cases in 1-2 days (assuming no new case develops while we contact trace.)

Effective December 14, each school will begin tracking the daily positive cases of COVID-19, which will be accessible to the community via the Monitoring Dashboard on our website.

School closings will be based on the following breakdown:

	<b>*Must close for 3 to 7 days</b>	<b>*Must close for 14 days</b>
<b>PA protocols</b> (rolling 14 day) *		
<b>Small school</b> (< 500 students) - East Bradford, East Goshen, Penn Wood	2 - 4 cases	5 or more cases
<b>Medium School</b> (500-900 students) – Stetson, Fugett, Fern Hill, Glen Acres, Hillsdale,	4 - 6 cases	7 or more cases

Exton, Mary C. Howse, Starkweather, Westtown- Thornbury		
<b>Large School</b> (> 900 students) - East, Henderson, Peirce, Rustin	6 to 10 cases	11 or more cases

*\*If necessary remediations can be completed sooner, and no new cases develop, then closure can be shorter than the minimum number of days.*

We understand that these new requirements are confusing and encourage all families to review the information provided by PA DOH and PDE as well as the COVID-19 data dashboards.

[PDE "Level of Transmission" Table](#)

[PA DOH Revised Face Covering Requirements](#)

[PDE School-Specific Rules for Closing due to COVID-19 Case Counts](#)

[PA DOH Data Dashboard](#)

[Chester County Department of Health Data Dashboard](#)

[West Chester Area School District Data Dashboard](#)

#### **Other important information:**

- If a school is forced to close, we may have very little time to provide notice to families.
- Reported positive cases for students who are in remote learning or virtual learning **DO NOT** count against the school's numbers for a closure. However, we will continue to track these cases on the district's COVID-19 dashboard.
- Unrelated to these new rules, staffing shortages due to quarantines may at times make it impossible to adequately or safely operate a school. We will do our best to keep our families informed about the status of any possible school closures.
- **In planning for the return to school next Monday, December 14**, we would also like to remind families about the quarantine protocols for anyone who has traveled recently. These restrictions originally went into place on November 20, but were revised on November 25 allowing travel without a quarantine if the trip is less than 24 hours in duration. [The travel restrictions are available on the PA DOH website.](#)

This remains a very challenging time for all of us. As always, thank you for your cooperation and support as we navigate the next phase of this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Jim Scanlon

Superintendent