

September 19 2020

Dear West Chester Area School District,

When our School Board approved our district reopening plan last month, the plan included a reevaluation and review of our instructional model by September 25. We have been closely following COVID-19 infection rates for Chester County and continue to communicate with the Chester County Department of Health and the CHOP Policy Lab.

If virus numbers remain stable, we are expecting to return to in-person instruction (with 6 feet of social distancing and mask requirements) next month. As you likely know, the Chester County Department of Health recommended that all schools in Chester and Delaware Counties remain fully virtual until October 9. Six feet of social distancing can only be achieved in our school district with a hybrid model (some students in at one time while others learn at home.)

Tentatively, we are considering a return to hybrid instruction in the following manner:

- **Monday October 19 - Elementary students (K-5) will return on a hybrid schedule.**
- **Thursday November 5 - Secondary students (6-12) will return on a hybrid schedule.**

On September 29, our School Board will vote on whether to approve these dates, as part of the reopening plans, and had significant input into developing them.

There are numerous hybrid models and we are working with our instructional staff to refine the details of these models for each level, and will communicate thoroughly about this. It is expected that each child will attend school in person two to three days a week while learning at home the other days. Cyber students will remain in their virtual program. We will continue to offer daily in-person instruction for some of our highest need special education students, as well as English Language Learners. We may be able to expand in-person instruction for other special needs children.

Additionally, sports will resume in this manner:

- This Monday September 21, mandatory practices for fall sports will resume. Information has been sent to parents of student athletes.
- Thursday September 24 first eligible day for golf competition.
- Monday September 28 – first eligible day for tennis, competitions.
- Week of October 5 - First eligible week for other sports competitions.

Some important notes:

- **We know that you have significant questions about the details of hybrid instruction.** We anticipate that the list of questions from parents includes, among other things, what

days their child will attend school, how they will learn from home, what procedures and protocols they will need to follow, and how we will address positive COVID-19 cases. We appreciate your patience as we work to provide communication to you about all of these details over the next several weeks. In the meantime, you can submit feedback to: reopening@wcasd.net.

- This return is contingent upon infection rates remaining stable. We are committed to following guidance from health experts and officials, and our plans must be fluid enough to change based on large surges in local infection rates. This means we may have to move back to virtual instruction at some point in the school year. We do not, however, anticipate a situation in which we would be frequently back and forth with district-wide in-person and hybrid instruction based on small fluctuations in infection rates.
- We will dedicate the first four days of hybrid instruction to only the students who are in the classroom so that students can have time to adjust to our new in-school safety procedures. Students who are at home will not have any assignments to complete. Our instructional calendar allows us to meet state instructional requirements if we do this.
- Once we begin hybrid instruction, we'll shorten the student day by 30 minutes every day to provide additional planning time for teachers. Planning time for our teachers is critical, and both hybrid and virtual instruction require additional planning time.
- Beginning on October 19 – Our student school day start and end times will be slightly modified in order to accommodate transportation issues and provide additional teacher planning time daily:
 - 7:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. (Henderson, East HS, Rustin, and Fugett Middle)
 - 8:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. (Stetson and Peirce Middle)
 - 8:40 a.m. to 2:40 p.m. (East Bradford, East Goshen, Exton, and Glen Acres Elementaries)
 - 9:10 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. (Penn Wood, Westtown-Thornbury, Hillsdale, Starkweather, Mary C. Howse, and Fern Hill Elementaries)
- We will designate two full days and four half-days of continued professional development for our staff prior to the students returning for in-person instruction.
- A Child's Place will continue to operate in our elementary schools during the hybrid model.

We've continued to closely monitor Chester County positivity rates. As September 19, our numbers place us near the Moderate level (down from last week.) Positive case count also declined from last week. The following metrics have been provided by the Chester County Department of Health:

Community Transmission	Incidence Rate per 100,000	AND/OR	PCR Test Positivity	Instructional Model
Low	<10	AND	<5%	In-Person
Moderate	≥10 and <40	AND	≥5% and <7%	Hybrid
High	≥40 and <80	OR	>7% and <10%	Virtual and/or Hybrid
Very High	≥80	OR	≥10%	Virtual

The opening of the 2020 school year has been challenging across our entire nation. We know that virtual learning is not ideal, but our instructional staff has been working incredibly hard and long hours to innovate and to reach our students in new ways. I am very impressed with their work and dedication to our students. Balancing students learning in-person and also at home in a hybrid model will present many new challenges. There are no easy answers. Again, we know that ultimately we simply can't find solutions at this time that will please everyone. We will do our level best to continue to follow the guidance of health officials while balancing the educational and emotional needs of our students, as well as the needs of our staff and parents.

This is an extremely challenging time for all. Thank you for your patience and support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jim Scanlon, Superintendent.