



This communication supersedes all previous communication.

Previous communications are archived on the District's [COVID-19 Webpage](#).

Friday, October 30, 2020

Greetings, West York Area School District Community:

Increasing In-person Classroom Instructional Time at the High School

Last week, I shared the information with you that the High School would be transitioning to an in-person schedule of four days per week. I'd like to clarify that this is for those students who are currently attending in-person. Those in the West York Cyber Academy will have no change to their schedule.

As a reminder, this transition will begin on Monday, November 23, 2020, and it only impacts the High School. If you have any questions, please reach out to Principal Jones.

Returning to Brick and Mortar Schools

Over the past several weeks, our building principals and counselors have been working with families who would like to increase the time of in-person learning for their children. Even with our West York Cyber Academy's success, many students still prefer the many benefits of attending classes in-person.

Transitioning into the brick and mortar classrooms takes quite a bit of time and effort, and several boxes need checking before making a successful move. For example, class sizes, transportation, and school supplies all need to be in place before changing a student's placement. While we do try to accommodate this move for all interested families, in some cases, it may not be possible or recommended for a later date to transition.

We are also aware that transitioning more students to a brick and mortar classroom may make it more difficult to socially distance children during the day. All families need to know that while we do our best to socially distance students in the classroom, on the playground, on buses, etc., there will be times when students are in close contact with other students and, as a result, may need to be quarantined if an outbreak occurs. If you have questions about how this might impact your children, please reach out to your child's teacher or principal.

COVID-19 Cases

Since reopening schools in August, we have communicated how decisions are made to quarantine students, classrooms, buses, or even close a school. I would like to share how the original guidance on these decisions has changed since the beginning of the school year.

If you have been following these weekly communications, you may recall the Department of Education's (DOE) chart that guided districts with reported cases of Covid-19. This original guidance has been evolving since the opening of schools because health officials can now see how the virus responds to public schools' various mitigation strategies and have updated their responses and recommendations to Districts.

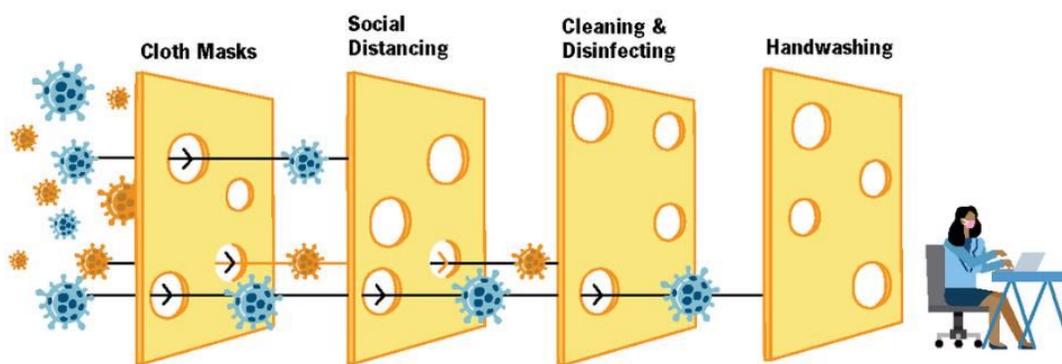
The decision-making process for responding to a confirmed positive case of Covid-19 involves many people in the District, along with state officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PaDOH).

Anytime a decision is made to close a school or quarantine close contacts, it is done to slow the virus's spread (transmission). This means that if we receive a report of a confirmed case of Covid-19 for a West York student or staff member, and we know with certainty that transmission occurred outside of school, then closing

the school may not be necessary to slow the spread of the virus. Rather than moving immediately to a complete closure, the PaDOH recommends that Districts quarantine individuals, groups, cohorts, buses, etc. who were close contacts of the positive individual to see if those actions stop the virus from spreading. Among our currently active cases in West York, none point to transmission occurring inside the school.

Essentially, the guidance, at this time, does not recommend making hard and fast classroom or school closure decisions solely on the “percent positivity” and the level of community spread, which was the initial recommendation. We are finding that there is not a single number of cases that would close a school or district without taking into account many other factors. Each case is unique, and our response depends on the circumstances surrounding each case and the effectiveness of our mitigation efforts, outlined in the District’s [Health and Safety Plan](#).

Below is a graphic that I obtained from the Children’s Hospital Policy Lab. The picture describes that “by layering mitigation strategies like masking, distancing, cohorting, and cleaning protocols, schools can prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 even if an infected individual is in the building or in contact with the school community” (policylab.chop.edu). We have found success in applying this layered mitigation approach when combined with our contact tracing efforts and health monitoring.



Each of the strategies below is already a component of West York’s Health and Safety Plan.

This week, we informed the community of positive cases in both the Middle School and the High School. After investigating, we learned that the transmission of Covid-19 occurred outside of school for each instance. So, rather than closing the buildings, we were able to identify and quarantine close contacts (see below on recent updates to the operational definition of close contact). Please know that this could change with another outbreak or if the level of community spread continues to increase. We are constantly monitoring the data, and we will communicate any changes to the current plan accordingly.

As inconvenient and disruptive as it is for students and staff to quarantine for up to two weeks, I feel that the entire District benefits when our buildings stay open, and our students have the option for in-person learning. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank our District families for letting us know, quickly, when students are demonstrating symptoms or if they are aware of being in close contact with a positive Covid-19 case. The diligence of our families, students, faculty, and staff is the best way to keep our doors open and Covid-19 out of our buildings. Please continue to practice healthy habits!

CDC Redefines Close Contact

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued an updated definition of what constitutes a “close contact.” The PA Department of Health (PaDOH) DOH continues to use 15 **consecutive** minutes of exposure at a distance of 6 feet or less as an operational definition for “close contact.” **However**, there are circumstances when someone is considered a close contact of a case after being within 6 feet for fewer than 15 consecutive minutes. For example, being extremely close in proximity to a positive Covid-19 case (e.g., face to face). West York continues to follow the guidance from the PaDOH when determining our response to positive cases of Covid-19 in West York.

School Board Vacancy

We have a vacancy on our School Board. Interested parties may find more information [here](#) about how to submit a letter of interest for the seat. The term runs until December 2021.

Reminders: Inclement Weather Days

We are getting close to the time of year when we begin to anticipate inclement weather days. Because the pandemic forced us all to learn how to provide and receive instruction virtually, we are now equipped to look at inclement weather days as a Distance-learning Day, just like our Wednesday Distance-learning Days. This is good news because we will not have to use snow/emergency make-up days. Since Distance-learning days are handled differently at each building, be on the look-out for communication from your building's principal regarding how these days will look for your children. For reference, the current 2020-21 District calendar may be found [here](#).

Student Meal Programs- Update

We have received notice from the USDA that they have extended the free breakfast and lunch program through June 30, 2021. This is terrific news for our families and means that **all breakfast and lunch meals across the District shall be provided, free of charge, to ALL students**. This includes pick-up meals for WY Cyber Academy students as well as meals for anyone 18 and under who reside in our District. Please follow your child's home building guidelines for ordering pick-up meals. At the secondary level, a second meal may be purchased at the regular meal rate. Menus for all buildings are posted on our website. More information may be found on our [website](#). Please contact Mr. Scott Rutkowski at scrutkowski@wyasd.org if you have any questions.

Spectators at Sporting Events

Please keep in mind that while spectators at District events are still limited, everyone may watch these events via live stream. Links to each live stream channel for District teams may be found [here](#).

COVID-19 Prevention

Keeping our schools open requires everyone's help every day. The following are two ways that everyone can pitch in to keep West York schools available to students:

1. Use the symptom monitoring tool with each of your school-age children before sending them every day, and if your child is demonstrating symptoms - please keep them home - and contact your school nurse. The symptom monitoring tool and nurse contact information can be found in the [Family Information Packet](#).
2. If students or family members have been in close contact with someone known to have tested positive for COVID-19, please keep everyone home and immediately reach out to the nurse in your child's building. *Close contact is defined as any individual who was within six feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes, starting from two days before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated. (Even though the CDC issued new guidelines, we will continue to use this metric until we receive further guidance from the PA Department of Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.)*

These two proactive measures will go a long way in preventing a large-scale quarantine while saving our families and staff much stress and worry. You can find more COVID-19 resources on our [website](#).

Building Visitors

All visitors must complete a screening form and have their temperature taken at each building. They will be expected to adhere to posted guidelines for social distancing to include wearing facemasks until further notice.

The Blue & White

The Blue & White is published at the end of each week and delivered via email. Past issues may be found [here](#). Please continue to share your positive photos throughout the year - it's a bright spot for all of us! You can send them to cmgreco@wyasd.org.

Best wishes for a great weekend.

Sincerely,
Todd M. Davies
Superintendent of Schools