

BOARD OF EDUCATION
SUSSEX-WANTAGE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Sussex-Wantage Community,

I am writing to provide you with an update on our operational plan moving forward. As I mentioned during our last Board of Education meeting, we have reflected a great deal on how to expand our in person instructional program. Throughout our planning process we have heard the perspectives of our faculty and staff, nurses, parents and guardians, regional experts, Board of Education, administration, and our Pandemic Teams. We have sincerely appreciated the healthy debate surrounding our school reopening plans and know the constraints that this experience has placed on everyone. We are pleased to announce that beginning **March 8th, 2021** students who currently attend in person instruction will have the opportunity to attend school four days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) utilizing a half day schedule initially. At this time, Wednesday will remain remote for all students.

Our approach at the onset of the school year was measured, cautious, and always focused on health and safety as a priority. In that regard, we have strived to maximize, to the extent practicable, social distancing and to be vigilant with safety protocols such as utilizing masks, hand sanitizer, disinfection techniques, and quarantining when warranted. I believe that these measures coupled with the collaboration of all of our stakeholders has resulted in a safe experience thus far. We appreciate your continued cooperation. I have provided some additional information below to assist you in understanding the path forward.

Phased in Schedule

In an effort to continue with a cautious and measured approach and to assist with the logistics of increasing our daily student population, we will begin the process with our half day schedule. Breakfast and lunch will not be provided on campus during this initial phase. As was the case during the beginning of the year, students can have a snack. More information will be coming out regarding students who participate in the free and reduced breakfast and lunch program.

The use of single session days is envisioned as a short term, temporary strategy. We will continue to make an assessment of local health data and keep the community informed as to when we will transition to full days. My sincere hope is to limit this to approximately two weeks. Shortly after we transition to full days, the next phase will be to incorporate in person instruction five days per week. We understand that some of you may want to continue to restrict your child to attending in person for only two days per week and maintain your current hybrid structure. At this time, we will afford you that opportunity. If you wish to do that please email your child's principal, teacher if at CEL or WES, and school secretary.

Students Who Are Currently Remote

As we indicated at the beginning of the school year, parents can change their child's designation with the beginning of each new marking period. The next marking period change is directly after Spring Break. If you would like to transition from full remote to in person instruction at that time, please email your child's principal, teacher if at CEL or WES, and school secretary. As a reminder, parents can choose a full remote option at any time.

SMS Students Transitioning to Different Classes

For the most part, students do not transition/change classes at CEL or WES. However, they do at SMS. While we have enhanced our cleaning routines, it is not viable for our staff to be able to clean each room, area, stairwell, etc...between class changes. With that in mind, some of you have asked if it is acceptable for your child to bring in hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing/disinfecting wipes that neutralize coronavirus for his/her own personal use. At this time, it is acceptable for your child to do that if it provides you with a greater degree of comfort and they are used as directed. Each classroom is also provided with general use hand sanitizer. We encourage your child to use hand sanitizer whenever they are unable to wash their hands.

Extracurricular Activities

While we are engaging in conversations with our regional partners regarding the potential to offer some extracurricular activities, our primary focus is on expanding our in person instruction. We will make an assessment of how that goes and keep you informed of any updates as they become available.

Social Distancing

Social distancing to the extent practicable will be reinforced throughout the school day. In moving forward, there will be some instances throughout the day when students may be closer than six feet. In those instances we will strive to mitigate those challenges through the continued use of masks and other barriers. Only visitors with appointments will be permitted to enter the building, and, whenever possible, parent and community meetings will continue to be convened virtually.

Inclement Weather Days-

You may recall our desire to have a balance between traditional snow days and remote learning days for inclement weather. As of late, we have utilized an increased amount of virtual instruction

for these days. I've received concerns that at times these days may have met with challenges; in particular with internet connectivity surrounding storms. In that regard, we apologize and will strive to improve. However, please be aware that the reason for utilizing virtual instruction is that we only have two more traditional snow days to use before we begin to remove days from Spring Break. We don't know what weather March will bring and I know how much stakeholders value spending time with their families. I am trying to avoid losing Spring Break days.

Face Coverings

Face coverings continue to be mandatory for faculty, staff, and students. Cloth face coverings that cover both the mouth *and* nose are recognized as acceptably protective. Please note: all dress code expectations apply.

Screenings

We continue to ask parents and guardians to self screen their children at home prior to coming to school for illness or a temperature above 100°F. Screenings will also be conducted at school upon arrival. It is critically important that any students who have a fever or exhibit signs or symptoms of any illness not come to school. If you have travelled to an area identified as having a travel advisory, please adhere to the NJDOH travel guidelines found here:

<https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information/travel-and-transportation/which-states-are-on-the-travel-advisory-list-are-there-travel-restrictions-to-or-from-new-jersey>

Student/Staff Safety and Hygiene

Reinforcement of proper hygiene such as regular handwashing, the use of hand sanitizer, and social distancing to the extent practicable will take place for all students and staff. Hand sanitizing stations have been provided to every classroom and strategically placed at other multiple locations throughout each building.

Learning Loss Committee

We are announcing the formation of a ***Learning Loss Committee*** to build upon district strategies to address student learning loss during the Pandemic. We would love to have parents and guardians on our committees in addition to faculty, staff, and students. If you are interested please email your child's principal.

Pre-K

At this time the Pre-K schedule will remain status quo.

Procedures for Possible Cases of COVID-19

The unfortunate reality is that despite our best collective efforts, we will still have instances of COVID-19. In those unfortunate circumstances, the Department of Health will continue to make an initial assessment of how to respond to the specific circumstance. Depending upon the issue their recommendations may range from a 24 hour transition to remote instruction to obtain more

information and conduct contact tracing to closing individual classrooms or the entire district for quarantine. In the event a confirmed case arises, stakeholders will continue to be informed while maintaining confidentiality.

We reiterate our commitment to remain adaptable to our local and regional health conditions, and state and federal guidelines for operating schools. We perceive that by continuing to act cautiously, it provides us with the best opportunity to accomplish that in a safe manner. We also understand that this has been a less than ideal circumstance and it is only through collaboration, cooperation, patience, and perseverance that we can continue to overcome this challenge. I sincerely appreciate your patience throughout this process and understand that for many of you this day could not come soon enough.

Sincerely,

Michael Gall
Superintendent/CEL Principal