

# West Chester Area School District



**Our mission is to educate and inspire  
our students to achieve their personal best.**





# WCASD Instructional Model Update

**February 22, 2021**



**Our Path Back to Five Day a Week In-person instruction**



**Update on Guidelines - Timeline and Next Steps**



**Board Questions**



# Extremely Challenging School Year

- This environment is not optimal for learning or teaching (rows, separation, masks, online, hybrid, etc.)
- Our staff have rallied in innumerable ways.
- Parents and students have been supportive, flexible, and resilient.
- Extremely difficult for everyone.
- Opinions are very divided on science, instructional models, risk adversity, and what's best for our entire community.
- Social media has made everything more difficult – rumors, speculation, polarization.
- We all want students back in school.
- There is hope.

# WCASD is following these Guidelines



**As of Feb 19** - Chester County Health Department (CCHD) guidelines for social distancing (changed to 6 feet but no less than 3) when transmission rates are below 100 ***for three consecutive weeks.*** ***This is in alignment with updated CDC Guidance.***



**As of Feb 6** - CCHD requirement for operating when transmission rates are in substantial phase or lower - moving schools to remote learning as per CCHD guidance based on linked transmission



Continue with face mask requirements/contact tracing/other mitigation strategies.



Closely Monitor conditions on a daily basis.



Chester County Health Department is local governing authority. Also consulting with CHOP, Chester County Hospital, State, and CDC.

# **Revised CCHD Guidance for School Closures – Necessary steps to instruct students at six feet of distancing with no less than 3 feet**

***As of Feb 19, 2021***



***PCR rates less than 10% (currently at 5.68%)***



***Transmission rates must be below 100 per 100,000 for three consecutive weeks (currently at 103/100,000)***



Staff must remain six feet from other adults and students



Enforce quarantine requirements – WCASD has thorough contact tracing procedures already in place.



Limits on sports and extra-curricular gatherings – WCASD has been following the governor's orders on these requirements.



***Clarification on many points and official guidance needed.***

# **Revised CCHD Guidance for School Closures – Necessary steps to instruct students at 6 feet but no less than 3 feet distancing**

***As of Feb 19, 2021***



Must have an approved antigen testing plan – WCASD approved its plan in January



Must offer remote or virtual option to families who do not want children to attend school in person



Schools continue to report all probable and positive cases to CCHD.



If additional individuals become positive while in quarantine, a move to virtual learning (“closure”) may not be warranted (the CCHD will provide closure guidance if needed.)



If county-wide case counts go higher once reduced distancing occurs, schools may continue to operate at less than 6 feet, unless individual schools are closed due to linked transmission. (e.g. if cases spike for a week or two at the county level, we will not be required to move back into hybrid as the only in-person choice.)



# Plan for in-person instruction when transmission rates fall to meet new guidance

- Week 1:** Elementary returns 4 days in person  
(Wednesday still Remote Learning)  
Secondary in hybrid
- Week 2:** Secondary returns 4 days in-person (Wednesday still Remote in Grades 6-12)  
Elementary returns to 5 days in-person (no Remote Wed)
- Week 3:** K – 12, all grades five days a week in-person (no Remote Wednesday)  
Remote and Cyber Options Remain  
Hybrid no longer an option



# Remote and Cyber Learning Continues

- Parents may choose to remain in WC Cyber, or Remote Learning for remainder of year.
- Planning has been occurring so we can be ready (rearranging seats in classrooms, verifying bus capacities, planning for cafeteria management, etc.)
- We will continue to adhere to other COVID guidance and direction regarding mitigation and closures. May have to move to virtual if cases occur in schools (and will return to full in-person, not hybrid.)





# Why stagger a return to school with elementary coming in first?

- We need to verify bus changes, new protocols with social distancing, new procedures with staff, cafeteria and recess procedures.
- Adjustments may need to be made during the first week of implementation. It is easier to manage the process with half the students, rather than all coming in the first week back.
- Adjustments may need to be made to the physical spacing in the first week – A remote day during that week allows for time to adjust while education continues remotely.
- Adjustments may need to be made with opening class sections due to space limitations, even at three feet. We anticipate the need to use library and music rooms for classroom space to finish the year.
- Our plan has prioritized younger students first when returning to school. Elementary classroom space is our most challenging due to the crowded schools. (Greystone Elementary under construction and opens this coming school year.)



# Parents will be asked to commit to a learning model

**Parents will be asked to select, for the duration of the school year:**

- ☐ **5 days a week, in person**
- ☐ **Remote**
- ☐ **Cyber**

- ***This will eliminate the hybrid option***
- **Instructional Choice Selection will likely be sent this week. (Seeking clarification this week from CCHD on updated guidance.)**



# Why eliminate hybrid option?

- The teaching and learning experience under the hybrid model is extremely difficult.
- Teachers can be much more effective if they can plan for two consistent groups (in-person or remote) instead of three (they would have some students in-person 5 days, in-person 2 days, and some remote), and an ever-changing in-person group of students.
- The goal of hybrid (two days a week – mix of in-person and in-school) is to provide social distancing of 6 feet in classrooms. When social distancing requirements are lowered, we have space to offer full, five-day-a-week instruction to all who want it. The need for hybrid is no longer there, as the social distancing requirements will have changed.



# How much social distancing can we accommodate?

- WCASD will work to provide as much social distancing as possible.
- In many cases, distancing in classrooms may still be 6 feet, or close to 6 feet.
- Staff will be asked to continue to maintain 6 feet of distancing between students and other adults.
- Students will not be seated less than 3 feet apart from other students at any given time.
- We will work to maximize distancing at lunches.
- The number of students remaining remote will impact distancing.
- Elementary schools are the most crowded.







# What are staff saying about guidance changes?

- Remote learning day has been valuable since it is the only day all students will remain on the same learning platform. When we bring more students into the schools at a reduced distance, many will still choose to remain remote. Teachers will still be teaching in-person and remote groups of students. Many would like this day to allow small group work and additional planning. Teaching to two groups is extremely challenging.
- All staff are frustrated with the lack of a state coordinated plan to vaccinate educators – 92% of staff are able and willing to be vaccinated.
- Many teachers believe they should be vaccinated before returning to less than six feet.
- Teachers want their students back in school but are concerned that it will be difficult to monitor student social distancing at three feet.
- Continued concerns about our ability to staff classrooms when quarantining takes place. At lower distances, we have less flexibility to move students for the day if teachers are out sick.



# What is WCASD Doing to Prepare for New Guidance?

## Immediately

Analyze Revised  
CCHD Guidance

## Last Week of February/ First Week of March

Parents asked to  
Complete  
Commitment Form

## Earliest Return Date March 15 or 22

Prepare Schools for New  
Guidance

- Modify Schedules
- Route Buses
- Modify Procedures with Staff
- Properly Outfit Classrooms & Cafeterias with Desks & Table Seating, etc.



# 5,000 students already attending 4 Days

|                   | <b>Cohort A<br/>2 days</b> | <b>Cohort B<br/>2 days</b> | <b>Cohort C<br/>4-5 days</b> | <b>Remote</b>      | <b>Cyber</b>      | <b>Total</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>Elementary</b> | 1,202<br><b>23%</b>        | 1,141<br><b>22%</b>        | 1,475<br><b>28%</b>          | 539<br><b>10%</b>  | 880<br><b>17%</b> | 5,237        |
| <b>Middle</b>     | 647<br><b>23%</b>          | 644<br><b>23%</b>          | 456<br><b>16%</b>            | 785<br><b>28%</b>  | 307<br><b>11%</b> | 2,839        |
| <b>High</b>       | 537<br><b>14%</b>          | 538<br><b>14%</b>          | 643<br><b>17%</b>            | 1915<br><b>49%</b> | 260<br><b>7%</b>  | 3,893        |

**Total number of Students    11,969**



# Rapid Testing at WCASD

- Project ACE-IT (Assisting Childhood Education through increased Testing) testing initiative for schools in Southeastern PA – goal to limit.
- WCASD is part of a national study.
- Beginning at the end of February, tests will be available for staff in each school who have volunteered to be tested weekly. (Approximately 10 staff in each building.)
- Potential gateway to another mitigation strategy.
- Test takes 15 minutes per person. Has limitations for widespread testing because of time involved. Rapid testing is evolving and may be available more broadly in future.







# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Will you have enough space to bring all students back to in-person instruction five days a week, if every remote student chooses to return?** Yes. Depending on how many parents choose to return to in-person, we may need to open additional class sections using music rooms and libraries.
- **Will you have enough space if every cyber student chooses to return?** We may have to use libraries, music room, etc. We will need to work through these logistics and possibly hire additional teachers.
- **How will cafeteria procedures work with reduced distancing?** We are finalizing details, and waiting for final guidance. We are adding dividers at lunch tables. If guidance still recommends six feet, we will use alternate spaces for lunches (e.g. classrooms, auxiliary gyms), as well as the cafeteria.
- **Are travel quarantines still in place?** Yes.
- **Will social distancing still occur on buses?** Distancing for buses should not change.
- **What happens if I'm not comfortable sending my child back at less than 6 feet distancing?** You will need to choose the Fully Remote or Cyber option.
- **If my child is sick or has to quarantine, can they learn remotely?** Yes.
- **What will next school year look like?** We are currently planning for full in-person instruction along with a K-12 cyber option.



# Questions?

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