



NORRISTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of the Superintendent
Administration Building
401 N. Whitehall Rd.
Norristown, PA 19403

Christopher T. Dormer, Superintendent of Schools

July 17, 2020

Dear Norristown Area School District Families:

On Wednesday, June 3, 2020, Governor Wolf announced the process for reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year under Yellow and Green phases. Each district is required to develop a Health and Safety plan to resume in-person instruction and to properly plan and account for our legally required 180 days of instruction. While we have received official guidance from 16 different sources, including the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Department of Health, and CDC, these documents have been a series of recommendations, with most decisions required to be made at the local level. When comparing all of these documents, one quickly recognizes inconsistency and a lack of coordination between county, state, and federal agencies. Because we have been expecting specific guidance from the Montgomery County Office of Public Health and updated guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, we have held off on making any district announcements, as we have not wanted to have mixed messages with frequently changing guidance. However, we recognize that families need information to begin to plan for the resumption of school next month. I am pleased to provide a broad overview.

We have convened a Reopening Task Force to work through the myriad of issues related to resuming school on August 31. Five committees are developing plans in five major areas - academics, operations, staff and student supports, communications and community relations, and legal and logistics. We look forward to including parents and community members in the near future. The guiding principle for the task force and for committee work to reopen schools is: ***To maximize and prioritize the health and safety of students, staff, families, and community while providing the most robust and rigorous educational program possible.*** Our initial parent survey from two weeks ago indicated that 60% of parents want or need an in-person school option, 20% would like a full-time cyber or virtual learning option, and 20% were unsure at that time.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health did release updated guidance related to the reopening of schools on Thursday afternoon, July 16, 2020. We also expect to receive Montgomery County specific guidance imminently. We will be reviewing these updated recommendations and mandates as they apply to our current plans and proposed options. *Please be aware that our plans can and most likely will change as the newest guidance is received, interpreted, and clarified by local and state officials.*

At this time, we plan to offer the following three educational options to parents under Green Phase at this time:

- Five days per week in-person instruction
- Five days per week cyber or virtual schooling through a district run program
- Hybrid option, where students would attend in-person on assigned days with virtual learning taking place on days when not in school buildings



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Though we are still working on finalizing specifics related to in-person schooling, such as transportation and food service, we will be following social distancing and safety protocols to minimize risk of infection and transmission. Every classroom will have student desks separated to the greatest extent possible facing the front of the room. A six foot zone has been marked in the front of each classroom to provide teachers with a socially distanced area to lead instruction. All staff will be provided with masks and face shields. All students and staff will be required to wear masks in accordance with the universal face covering order from the Governor. We will have three sided “sneeze guards” for students desks when the recommended spacing is not possible and when students will need breaks from the required wearing of masks in school buildings. We have invested in cleaning protocols, supplies, and equipment that will ensure classrooms are disinfected during the school day in addition to a regular cleaning and disinfection that will occur after the conclusion of the school day. We have secured and will be utilizing a UV light technology in all instructional spaces during our after school cleaning that is shown to kill 99.9% of microbes.

We also are developing plans should cases increase in Montgomery County and we are forced to impose greater restrictions under Yellow Phase or Red Phase. Our plans would be as follows:
Yellow Phase:

- Five days per week in-person instruction suspended - all students attending in-person instruction move to hybrid option
- Hybrid option, where students would attend in-person on assigned days with virtual learning taking place on days when not in school buildings
- Five days per week cyber or virtual schooling through a district run program continues

Red Phase:

- All in-person instruction suspended
- All students received instruction via distance learning

We will share ongoing updates with all stakeholders as things will continue to evolve and change. The district website will feature a dedicated “Reopening of School” page that will contain all information and messages.

Over these next two weeks, we will send another survey to families to better determine your current needs and to guide the finalization of our reopening plans. We will continue to move in a deliberate manner to fulfill our planning requirements following our guiding principle. *Health and safety will be maximized and prioritized for everyone*, while we fulfill our responsibilities to provide the very best education for the students of the Norristown Area School District.

Please continue to stay safe and healthy!



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Sincerely,

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