



NORRISTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

Christopher T. Dormer, Superintendent of Schools

July 16, 2020

Dear Norristown Area School District Community:

On Wednesday, June 10, 2020, Governor Wolf announced and released preliminary guidance on resuming youth athletics and interscholastic sports. One of the requirements of this guidance is the approval of an Athletic Health and Safety plan by each district's school board. Approval of the plan is needed to resume voluntary summer workouts, which is the first in a series of activities that occur as a normal and permissible part of interscholastic athletics. With our regularly scheduled Board meeting less than two weeks away from that announcement date, our team worked in an expedited manner to prepare a plan for consideration. On Monday, June 22, 2020, a draft Athletic Health and Safety plan was presented to the Board during its Regular Voting Meeting. As was communicated previously, the Board decided to table approval of the plan to proceed with an abundance of caution and allow for more detailed planning to occur to best ensure the health and safety of students and staff. This included not resuming activities the Monday immediately following the 4th of July holiday weekend, when there would be an increased risk of exposure. The goal was to present an updated Athletic Health and Safety plan at tonight's Facilities and Finance Committee meeting, after the district was to receive county specific guidance from the Montgomery County Office of Public Health, updated guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and specific sports related guidance from PIAA, the state's governing body for interscholastic sports.

Since the June 22 Board Meeting, guidance is still pending. Montgomery County guidance has been delayed. Updated guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health scheduled to be released on Friday, July 10, 2020, has not been issued. The PIAA Board of Governors met on Tuesday, July 14, and again on July 15 to discuss the start of fall sports. I was notified less than one hour before our July 15 Facilities and Finance Committee meeting that PIAA has chosen to remain on schedule for fall sports, unless directed otherwise by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Despite this lack of updated guidance, our team did not delay our planning. I want to publicly commend Mr. Palladino, our Athletic Director, Mr. Roth, our high school principal, our fall and winter coaches, and other members of an expanded planning committee. The committee did an outstanding job of adding important and team specific information to our athletic health and safety plan.

The one lingering and important question we have is not one that anyone can answer in advance of resuming activities - Is the reward of resuming in-person voluntary workouts worth the risk of exposure, given the recent increase in cases locally and nationally. While I wholeheartedly support our coaches wanting to provide the best and safest in-person opportunities for our student athletes, recent events and decisions have forced me to pause. The New Jersey state sports body



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has voted to delay the start of their high school fall sports season and will only complete a shortened season. The PSAC, the college association of Pennsylvania state schools, has reportedly cancelled all fall sports this year. And as we look at professional basketball, hockey, and baseball as they are in the initial steps of trying to restart their seasons, reports of positive cases still occur despite strict safety and isolation protocols.

As Superintendent of Schools, I do not feel it is prudent to resume voluntary athletic workouts at this time. The reward does not outweigh the risks, and we as a school district are rightfully focusing on how we will reopen schools next month. Therefore, I am announcing that I have decided to delay consideration of our Athletic Health and Safety Plan at this time.

I am hopeful that long overdue guidance from the PA Department of Health and Montgomery County Office of Public Health will be in our hands sooner rather than later. Now that PIAA has announced that they plan to begin fall sports as currently scheduled, we have officially scheduled an additional Facilities and Finance Committee meeting on Wednesday, August 5, for review and consideration of the updated athletic plan. This will allow for the start of heat acclimation on Monday, August 10, as scheduled, with the first day of fall practice to follow on Monday, August 17. I thank everyone for their patience and appreciate your understanding of our decisions to maximize and prioritize the health and safety of our students, staff, families, and community.

Sincerely,

Christopher T. Dormer
Superintendent of Schools