



North Schuylkill School District

Robert J. Ackell, Ed. D., Superintendent

*Robert L. Amos, Business Manager
Kimberly M. Groody, Supervisor of Curriculum*

October 9, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am writing to update the stakeholders of our School District regarding the beginning of the school year and related COVID-19 issues.

First, I am happy to report that the start of the school year has been an overall success. This success is the result of the combined efforts of many people. Our staff worked very hard to prepare for and ultimately start school this year. Providing a variety of choices of educational programs (in-person and virtual) for our students and their families, as well as developing processes and procedures to keep everyone safe has been very challenging. I would like to thank all of our staff for the hard work that they have completed. In addition, I would like to thank our parents for their diligence, flexibility, support and cooperation during this time. The year would not have been a success without our parents. Finally, I would like to thank our students. Our students have been great! They have been extremely cooperative, hardworking and conscientious. The successful start to the school year has truly been a team effort. Thank you all! We did face a few minor glitches here and there, considering everything, I am very happy with how well things worked out.

At this time, stress and nervousness is in abundance. Rumors seem to be circulating on a regular basis. I would like to assure everyone that we are making every effort to address COVID-19 cases, quarantining, contact tracing and related issues in a thorough and timely manner. We have been conferencing with representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Health. We had instances where quarantining occurred because of exposure to people that have tested positive. Please know that we will contact every person that we identify as being exposed to a person testing positive for COVID-19.

There seems to be continued confusion regarding the process of notification, quarantining and returning to school. The guidelines from the Department of Health states that only people with direct exposure to a positive COVID-19 case will be quarantined. We will only notify those people that have experienced direct exposure to a person testing positive for COVID-19. Students are required to wear a mask and have a desk shield for protection. The Pennsylvania Department of Health recommends quarantining students who sit next to a positive classmate when the desks are less than six feet apart and the time is longer than 15 minutes. The District cannot guarantee that desks are six feet apart. If six feet is not achievable, students are spaced to the maximum extent feasible.

We acknowledge there is a direct connection between the wellness of our School District to healthy families and our workforce. All are vital to our community thriving. In the best interest of education, the North Schuylkill School District recognizes the need to have students participating in face-to-face instruction as often as possible. The symptoms of



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COVID-19 can look like other common illnesses – colds, strep throat, or allergies. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 in children are fever and cough. However, children may have any of these signs or symptoms of COVID-19 including, but not limited to, *Fever or Chills, Cough, Nasal Congestion or Runny Nose, New Loss of Taste or Smell, Sore Throat, Shortness of Breath or Difficulty Breathing, Diarrhea, Nausea or Vomiting, Stomachache, Tiredness, Headache, Muscle or Body Aches*. If your child has symptoms or may have been exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, please keep them home and have them evaluated by a medical provider. If you are waiting for any test results, please keep them home until cleared to return. Schools have a significant role to play in slowing the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate the fullest cooperation of all parents to keep their own and other students, as well as our staff, safe. These are trying times for everyone and your cooperation is certainly appreciated.

The Health and Safety Plan captures School District guidance, with accompanying action steps, that will be implemented based on local, state and medical experts. This is a fluid document based on those guidelines, which will continue to develop over time. This plan is based on the District's capability to follow the guidelines to the best of our ability. However, this plan is developed to reduce the level of risk, but does not completely eliminate risks and exposure. For families with concerns, we recommend our K-12 virtual educational option. An overarching goal is to serve as proactive contributors to the overall wellness of the Spartan Community by keeping it healthy, thriving and strong. Be mindful that as long as there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, there are no strategies that will completely eliminate transmission risk within a school population.

Realizing Covid-19 will be present throughout the foreseeable future and outbreaks may be determined and change as our community continues to react, flexibility will be an utmost priority. The District's Plan will be committed to adjusting its approach based on the reality of the virus' spread in the community. Again, I want to thank everyone for your cooperation and efforts. We will navigate through this very trying time together.

Sincerely,

Robert J Ackell, Ed.D.
Superintendent

RJA/mlc

NOTE: The District is now utilizing ZippSlip as our notification device. If you are not receiving updates via phone calls, text messages or emails, please contact the main office in your child's building and let them know that you need to be added in the ZippSlip system.

NSE: 570-874-3661 JSHS: 570-874-0495