



August 13, 2020

Dear TASD Families:

This communication provides several important updates to the upcoming 2020-21 school year.

Movement to a Hybrid Model of Instruction

On August 10, 2020, the Departments of Education and Health released recommendations for instructional models based on the transmission of COVID-19. The recommendations include a new system that provides guidance to school districts by replacing the county colors of green, yellow, and red with new categories of *Levels of Community Transmission of COVID-19: Low Incidence/Transmission, Moderate Incidence/Transmission, or Substantial Incidence/Transmission*. Two of the three counties over which TASD reaches are considered in the “moderate level” category. In the moderate level, the recommendation is to use a hybrid/blended model or a fully remote model of instruction.

On Tuesday evening, the TASD School Board voted to amend our Health and Safety Plan to employ a hybrid model for returning to school for 2020-21.

The most recent recommendations define a blended/hybrid instructional model as,

Blended (Hybrid) Learning Model: Any model in which the number of students in a school building is reduced to allow for social distancing of 6 feet. This may be accomplished in many ways, including split schedules, schedules that rotate by day or week, or similar approaches. For these recommendations, blended learning also includes scaffolded approaches that treat grade levels in a differentiated manner.

Given this definition and the most recent recommendations, our model balances the best interests of staff, students, and families of the Tyrone Area School District. The TASD will implement the following instructional model:

PreK – Students will be divided into two groups (A and B); families will be assigned to the same group. On five-day weeks, groups will follow the schedule shown in the chart below. Please note that on weeks that have fewer than five school days, each group will have at least one day of in-person instruction. A calendar and group assignments will be released in a few days.

PreK Hybrid Schedule for TASD				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Group A: In-School/ In-Person Learning	Group A: In-School/ In-Person Learning	Group A and Group B alternate in-person instruction every other Wednesday (Schedule TBA)	Group B: In-School/ In-Person Learning	Group B: In-School/ In-Person Learning
Group B: Virtual At- Home Learning	Group B: Virtual At- Home Learning		Group A: Virtual At- Home Learning	Group A: Virtual At- Home Learning

Kdg – 4th grade – All students will attend five days per week. Additional classrooms will be added to the largest grade levels to reduce the number of students in each classroom. This will help to ensure that elementary classrooms maintain a minimum of six feet between students when seated at their desks. This decision was made based on the recognition that elementary children will benefit more from in-person learning opportunities than a more heavily remote environment.

5th grade – 12th grade – Students will be divided into two groups (A and B); families will be assigned to the same group. On five-day weeks, groups will follow the schedule shown in the chart below. Please note that on weeks that have fewer than five school days, each group will have at least one day of in-person instruction. Student participation in the work provided during the virtual/at home days is not optional, as it was in some cases during the Spring of 2020. This learning will be asynchronous (not real-time instruction), graded, and a necessary part of students’ learning. Attendance will be recorded daily for all students regardless of their learning environment. Provisions will be made for students with no or limited internet access. Students with special circumstances may be assigned to attend more often. GACTC students will have a coordinated schedule to allow continued participation in those programs. A calendar and group assignments will be released in a few days.

5 th – 12 th Grade Hybrid Schedule for TASD				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Group A: In-School/ In-Person Learning	Group A: In-School/ In-Person Learning	Group A and Group B alternate in-person instruction every other Wednesday (Schedule TBA)	Group B: In School/ In-Person Learning	Group B: In School/ In-Person Learning
Group B: Virtual/ At-Home Learning	Group B: Virtual/ At-Home Learning		Group A: Virtual/ At-Home Learning	Group A: Virtual/ At-Home Learning
Group C: Students with special circumstances (ex. IEP needs, GACTC, no internet)				

Timeline

This PreK – 12th grade model will be implemented for the first marking period (through October 29, 2020). If circumstances allow us to return to full reopening prior to that time, appropriate notice will be given to staff and families.

We recognize that implementing this model may not be a permanent solution. We will continue to monitor the new risk levels system and to be vigilant about the numbers in our counties and communities. The hope is that, at some point, we will be able to resume with our full reopening plan; however, the realization also exists that we may need to employ a fully virtual model as we move along through the year. Changing to a fully virtual model could occur for various reasons, such as closing all schools due to a widespread outbreak or quarantining of a class or building. Due to the unpredictable nature of this situation, we may not be able to provide advanced notice of a closure. While this isn’t ideal, we want to be transparent about these potential scenarios so that you are prepared in any event.

2020-21 Calendar Adjustment – Teacher In-Service Day Added

On August 11, 2020, the Tyrone Area School Board approved a change to the 2020-21 district calendar. As a result, **Monday, August 31, 2020**, will be a teacher in-service day, which means that there is **no school for students** on that day. The updated calendar posted on the district website reflects this change.

Travel Advisory Information

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADoH) has issued a travel advisory that now includes 22 states. The advisory recommends that people who travel to one of the listed states should self-quarantine upon return. Additional information about Pennsylvania’s travel advisories during the pandemic can be found at <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Travelers.aspx>.

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While we understand that this declaration is an “advisory” and is not a mandate, we recommend that when returning from one of the states on the advisory list you contact your healthcare provider to discuss the details of your trip. This will enable your physician to determine if a quarantine and/or a COVID-19 test is necessary. If you intend or are advised to quarantine, please contact the school office to make arrangements for schoolwork and to alert school staff of your situation. Absences due to quarantine will be excused, *if reported at the start of the quarantine*.

We strongly suggest that you avoid out-of-state travel over the next few weeks. However, if circumstances necessitate travel to one of the states on Pennsylvania’s advisory list, we urge you to follow the protocol detailed above.

Closing Remarks

We understand that this continues to be a very stressful time, particularly due to the short timeline under which we are now working before the return to classes. We appreciate everyone’s patience as we work to implement these plans and to return students to a school routine. Student and staff health and safety continue to be a priority for the Board and the Administration, and we will work together to balance that with the best educational model that we can. Everyone’s adherence to the public safety guidelines is a way for us to work together. We all have the same goal—to return all students to full time, in-person instruction.

Sincerely,

Leslie A. Estep
Superintendent of Schools

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