

Lancaster Central School District

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Michael J. Vallely, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

April 13, 2021

Hello LCSD Families,

Over the summer, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in concert with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Governor's office, mandated "schools must ensure that appropriate social distancing (i.e., six feet) is maintained between individuals while in school facilities or on school grounds." That decision forced us to implement a hybrid learning model.

Thank you to the best students, community, faculty, staff, and administration in all of New York, as together we were able to overcome the challenges that mandate presented. Although it has not been easy, together we were able to navigate an every-other-day hybrid model that maximized learning and the student experience. On November 23, 2020, when we were forced to go 100% remote instruction by Governor Cuomo's "orange zone" designation, together we transitioned to fully remote instruction. And then again on December 14, 2020, together we were leaders in WNY as we were one of eight districts who transitioned back to hybrid learning prior to winter break. This demonstrated what we have said all along, we want our Lancaster students safely in classrooms with our teachers as much as possible.

Most recently, on Friday evening, Dr. Howard Zucker, NYS Commissioner of Health, finally responded ([NYSDOH Guidance](#)) to the changes issued by the CDC on March 19, 2021 ([CDC Guidance](#)) and changed the physical distance guidelines to allow three feet of distance between students in NYS. The Erie County Department of Health quickly responded Saturday ([ECDOH Response](#)). We have spent the past several months planning and preparing for this change, but awaited the details from the NYSDOH and the ECDOH. Please review the full documents linked above or the highlights of the NYSDOH guidance (blue) and its potential impact on Lancaster students below:

- Schools/districts may choose to reduce physical distancing to no less than three feet between students during academic instruction; however, school/districts must follow CDC recommendations for physical distancing depending upon community transmission rates and grade levels.
 - In counties with high risk of transmission (i.e., Erie County), elementary schools (grades PK-6) can maintain physical distance of at least three feet between students in classrooms.
 - We are targeting Monday, April 26, 2021 as the date for students in our K-3 buildings and William Street School to return to school upon fulfilling the requirements of the guidance.
 - In areas with high levels of community transmission (defined as greater than 100 new cases per 100,000 person), such as Erie County, middle schools and high schools must

maintain 6 feet of distance between students unless students are cohorted. Cohorting involves creating groups of students that are separated from other groups by at least 6 feet throughout the entire day.

- Students at LMS and LHS will have to remain in the current hybrid model until the levels of community transmission decrease below 100 new cases per 100,000 people.
- Students in the elementary grades must maintain six feet of distance while eating, participating in aerobic activities, and certain music classes.
 - Due to these regulations, physical education, meals, and some music classes may take place in alternative settings.
- Schools/districts moving to physical distancing of less than six feet should strongly consider implementing screening testing protocols to ensure monitoring.
 - COVID-19 testing consent provided by parents earlier in the year will remain in effect. Please send an email to LCSDConsent@lancasterschools.org if you would like to change your consent.
 - Additional details will be forthcoming when the NYSDOH or the ECDOH provides guidance.
- School districts must follow all quarantine protocols, as it relates to contact tracing, set forth by the Erie County Department of Health.
 - The decrease in physical distancing to three feet coupled with the current contact tracing protocols (i.e., close contact, per ECDOH, is defined as being in contact with someone closer than 6 feet for more than 10 minutes) could result in the quarantining of additional students. We must watch this closely as we move closer to April 26th.
 - Please review the information from ECDOH ([Isolation and Quarantine Documents](#)).
- Modified plans must be posted online and opportunity for stakeholder input and feedback must be provided.
 - Please email covid19questions@lancasterschools.org with input and feedback to help as we continue to refine our plan.
 - Once the plan is placed online we will provide opportunities for additional input from stakeholders.
 - A video presentation will be made available later this week to further detail some of the highlights and challenges while addressing frequently asked questions.

K-6 families who selected the hybrid learning model for the second semester will transition to fully in-person instruction. Those K-6 families who selected 100% remote learning for their child for the second semester will maintain that learning model. It should be noted that another surge or spike in COVID-19 cases at the district or regional level could cause another transition to fully remote instruction like we experienced in November 2020. We do not foresee such an event; however, we are planning and preparing for that possibility.

Please understand that it is our greatest hope to have all students back in our buildings full time and we are and will continue to work diligently to enable that to happen within the framework of this new guidance.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Vallely, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools