



NEW HOPE-SOLEBURY SCHOOL DISTRICT
*Engaging, Enriching, and Empowering All Students
through a World-Class Education*

July 23, 2020

Dear New Hope-Solebury Community,

We hope that you are all continuing to enjoy your summer vacations. We appreciated having such large attendance at our Back to School Plan Townhall Meeting on Tuesday. It was wonderful to have so many members of our school district community in attendance to be a part of the conversation about our plans for the 2020-2021 school year. As noted in our meeting on Tuesday, we recognize none of the plans that we have proposed are going to be as desirable as a full return to the way schools were prior to the pandemic. Regrettably, we are not able to resume school where we left off in the spring. We have attempted to provide for two school plans from which parents and families can choose which we believe offer the best options at this time while meeting health and safety regulations and meeting the instructional needs of our students and families. The questions you provided during the meeting were very helpful in allowing us an opportunity to highlight elements of our plan and to address issues and concerns which you may have had with our presentation. We will continue to keep you informed as we continue to hone and improve the specifics of these plans going forward.

TOWNHALL MEETING ON REOPENING OF SCHOOL

On Tuesday, July 21, 2020, we provided a townhall meeting during which we presented our current plans for the reopening of our schools in the fall. We presented the background and research which laid the foundation for our plans, we presented the components of our Health and Safety Plan and we shared the framework for our academic plan. The Health and Safety Plan will be formally reviewed by the Board of School Directors on Wednesday, July 29, 2020 at a Special Meeting of the Board of School Directors. We will be continuing to develop the details of our academic plan in the coming weeks based upon the feedback we receive from our families about whether they are opting for in person or online learning for the 2020-2021 school year. A link to a recording of the townhall meeting can be found [here](#). We have also provided the Power Point Presentation from the Townhall Meeting on the Health and Safety Plan [here](#). We have also created an infographic to help outline the key components of our Health and Safety Plan which can be found [here](#).

ACADEMIC PLAN FOR 2020-2021

For the coming school year, we are offering two academic programs parents can choose from for their children's educational plan. The selection will take place through a survey which will be distributed the week of July 27, 2020, and which will ask each parent to choose either having their children to come to school in a brick and mortar school environment with social distancing measures in place as outlined in our Health and Safety Plan or coming to school virtually through the New Hope-Solebury Virtual Academy. Once each family selects which program they would like to be a part of for the school year, it is expected that they will remain in the program through the end of the first marking period so that we can effectively allocate staff and resources to the program selected. Opportunities to change programs will be available each marking period.

This year we will also be moving our learning management system to Canvas across the entire school district. Previously, Canvas was utilized at the high school, but in order to respond to the concerns from parents about a consistent learning platform when we transitioned to online learning in the fall, we wanted to provide one platform for the start of this school year. In order to help inform family decisions on which program to select, we have provided a basic framework of the two plans below for your reference.

PLAN A: BRICK AND MORTAR SCHOOL PROGRAM

Our brick and mortar option will resemble the traditional school program to the maximum extent possible. Instruction will continue in the regular classroom setting provided by our teachers and utilizing our district curriculum. There will be some noticeable changes in the way the schools and classrooms are configured to facilitate social distancing of students, masks will be required to be worn throughout the day, large group activities and field trips will be eliminated, but regular classroom activities and instruction will continue in its traditional form. In this plan students would come to school five days per week.

PLAN B: NEW HOPE-SOLEBURY VIRTUAL ACADEMY PROGRAM

In our New Hope-Solebury Academy option, student learning will take place online utilizing the Canvas learning management system. The instructional modality will be both synchronous and asynchronous. The virtual academy will look significantly different from the program in the spring. We will now require mandatory attendance and we will return to a traditional grading format. There will be synchronous delivery blocks of instruction which will be streamed to the students to provide direct instruction in new concepts and procedures. Students will have asynchronous learning opportunities to complete independent work in the Canvas learning management system when not receiving direct synchronous instruction. These lessons will be taught by our New Hope-Solebury faculty and staff and will be streamed from the regular education classroom so that students are included in the class they would have attended in the regular school setting. We are also going to be providing cyber mentors to assist students throughout the day as needed with their instruction. Work will be submitted through the Canvas learning management system. Depending on the number of students who enroll in this option we may modify this delivery model slightly to provide additional staffing resources to support our students in this platform due to the greater need for supports and resources.

SCHOOL CLOSURE PLAN

If the school district is forced to close as we did in the spring, the entire school district would transition to an online learning model through the Canvas learning management system and we would continue with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning in a very similar structure as delivered in the Virtual Academy Program.

EXTRA CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

Regardless of the program students select, they would continue to be entitled to participate in extracurricular programs which take place in the schools in the 2020-2021 school year. There will be limits, however, on which programs could be offered in a virtual setting so those students interested in programs that cannot be offered virtually would need to attend in person to participate.

WHY IS THE SCHOOL DISTRICT NOT OFFERING A HYBRID INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN?

Due to the size of our school district we are not able to offer three different options for instruction as other school districts have proposed. We reviewed the various options available and wanted to provide options for parents who were interested in their students returning to school in a brick and mortar setting and for those parents and students who were not interested wanted to remain in a virtual setting. We were very conscious that providing a hybrid model of instruction would have serious implications for many of our families in being able to continue working while supporting their children's learning.

Additionally, we were also very aware that what can be provided in an alternating learning model and online instruction will never rise to the level of what happens on a daily basis for our students in a brick and mortar classroom. We also recognize the disruptiveness of having an alternating school schedule for consistency of instruction for our students when they are not in the classroom and regardless of what efforts we would put in place to mitigate this issue, there would certainly be an impact on the amount of instruction our students would receive and the amount of curricular material which could effectively be covered in this model. We also were concerned about the impact that the hybrid model would have on our students' families. With our school district's small size we will be able to achieve a substantial distance between our students to help to mitigate the spread of the disease, especially as some of our families opt for the online model of instruction, and provide a solid educational program through the two models we have selected. For these reasons we have opted not to pursue this model unless it was absolutely necessary.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROVISIONS FOR THE OPENING OF SCHOOL

During our presentation on Tuesday evening we attempted to provide an overview of the extensive Health and Safety Plan which we developed for the opening of school. There were several topics with regards to the components of the plan which we would like to address and provide additional clarification.

MASKS

Students will be required to wear masks throughout the day except when they are engaged in physical activity or eating. In these cases, students will be distanced at six feet since they will not be able to wear their masks at these times. A variety of facial coverings will be permitted to fulfill this requirement. We have confirmed with the Pennsylvania and Bucks County Departments of Health that face shields will be permissible face coverings because they will block fluids from the mouth and nose and they will also protect the eyes which is something traditional masks do not permit. The district will not be providing masks, but we will provide one face shield to each student due to the generous donation of the Bucks County Commissioners. We have also provided a guide to assist you in supporting your students in learning how to properly wear a mask which is linked [here](#).

SOCIAL DISTANCING

There was some question as to why the school district is using three feet distancing as the minimum requirement and not six feet as suggested by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The proposal from the Pennsylvania Department of Health contemplates that districts will not be able to reach the six foot distancing due to the sizes of classrooms and the interruptions to the educational program and indicates throughout their guidance six foot distancing should be provided to the extent feasible and where it does not interrupt the instructional program.

We have established three feet minimum distancing and are requiring masks throughout the day to provide two ways in which we are working to mitigate the spread of the disease. As noted in our meeting on Tuesday, we will be providing the maximum amount of distance possible in our classrooms and three feet is a minimum guideline. When some of our families opt for the online programming this will further allow us to more effectively spread our students out in the classroom. The only alternative to this approach would be to go to a hybrid model of instruction which would be compromising our educational program delivery and be an impediment to many of our students and their families.

VENTILATION AND OUTDOOR INSTRUCTION OPPORTUNITIES

We have been working to enhance the performance of our HVAC system to increase outdoor air coming into our schools and increasing the filters utilize to maximize their ability to screen for disease in our schools. We have also informed teachers they can utilize outdoor space for instruction as the weather permits.

TEMPERATURES/HEALTH SCREENS

Parents will be asked to complete health screens at home prior to sending their students to school. If a child is exhibiting any symptoms they should not be sent to school. The faculty will review the symptoms with the students at the start of each day and send any students to the nurse who report symptoms. We will not be doing temperature checks as this was not recommended by the Department of Health as a good indicator of students who are potentially infected as this only has a 50% success rate in identifying individuals who are infected.

STEPS TAKEN WITH STUDENTS WHO PRESENT WITH SYMPTOMS OR ARE DETERMINED TO BE INFECTED WITH COVID

It is important that families and students take preventative measures to protect our students, faculty and staff. We have provided an infographic with overall guidelines to follow found [here](#). If a student or staff member presents with COVID symptoms they will be immediately sent to the nurse for evaluation and sent home with the direction they follow up with their health care provider and provide documentation in order to return to school.

In the event a student is diagnosed with COVID, the Bucks County Department of Health will be notified, and a letter will be sent home to parents in coordination with the Department of Health. Contact tracing will be done by the school and the Department of Health to determine who needs to be quarantined. Student, staff and any close contacts identified will be on quarantine for 14 days as directed by the Bucks County Department of Health. We will also take other measures including, closing off areas used by the person who is sick, opening outside doors and windows to increase air circulation, waiting 24 hours before cleaning the room, clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.

We have also created several charts to provide guidance on the process which will be utilized for any students or staff who are presenting with symptoms of COVID or identified with COVID. The charts below will provide some additional guidance on the steps we will be taking in these situations.

[Procedure for Student gets sick at school](#)

[Procedure for Student diagnosed with COVID](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) DOCUMENT

We have included [here](#) a FAQ document designed to answer many questions we have received with regards to our reopening plans and the processes and procedures which we intend to implement when we reopen schools in the fall. We designed this document to be very comprehensive and will continue to add to the document as more plans are developed and there may be modifications as our plans change with updated guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education or Department of Health.

SURVEY

Next week we will be delivering a survey to parents to complete with regards to their plans for students to return to school. It is important to complete this survey so we know your intentions for the return to school plan and can adjust our instructional programming accordingly. We fully recognize that this is a difficult decision and that there is a wide array of emotions involved in making this determination. This survey will ask parents and families to examine both instructional models that the school district is proposing in the fall and to commit to instruction in person with social distancing or online. This information will help us to plan for the opening of school in the fall and determine how many students are expected in each school district program.

We will also be seeking information about your plans for transportation and your plans for food service for the 2020-2021 school year. These surveys will be distributed after the presentation of the opening of school plans at the July meeting of the Board of School Directors. After each family has decided for their placement for the fall, we are expecting them to remain in that placement until the end of the first marking period when a change of placement could happen. This will help us to regulate our program and ensure we have adequate staffing to meet the needs of both programs.

PANDEMIC RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS

As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, many adults have been dealing with heightened anxiety and stress related to the impact of the pandemic on our daily lives. Our students are also grappling with many of these concerns. We are acutely focused on this as we develop our Health and Safety Plan and we have added an additional section and integrated into the plan interventions and strategies to support our students when they return to school. We wanted to also provide parents with resources to support calming students and helping them with their adjustment to the return to school. We have begun building resources on our website to support you to assist your students which have been provided by our district counselors. These resources can be found [here](#).

Please continue to check our COVID-19 website over the summer as we will be continuing to update that site with additional resources and materials as they are developed. We hope you and your family continue to have a wonderful weekend and we will continue to keep you updated as our plans continue to develop, and more information becomes available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles W. Lentz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Charles W. Lentz, Ed.D.
