

# Portage Area School District

## Reopening of School for the 2020-2021 School Year

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

Updated Thursday, August 20, 2020

As the days of summer slowly wind down, thoughts of a new school year are in the minds of students, parents, staff, and community members. COVID-19 has impacted everyone's life in unimaginable ways. Education has been no exception. Since March, school officials have been diligently working to prepare for the start of the new school year using the latest guidance from the State and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. As part of this process, the school district has developed a Health and Safety Plan to address concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan is a living document, meaning it changes on a daily basis as new information becomes available. While the school district is doing everything possible to minimize the risk of COVID-19, no amount of action can guarantee someone will not be infected with COVID-19.

#### **What is the Health and Safety Plan?**

As part of the phased reopening of Pennsylvania, the Portage Area School District is mandated to develop a Health and Safety Plan for the reopening of the 20-21 school year as guidelines for all instructional and non-instructional activities. This plan includes actions the district will take to address 1) cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and ventilation, 2) social distancing and other protocols, 3) monitoring student and staff health, and 4) other considerations for students and staff. Given the dynamic nature of this pandemic, this plan will be flexible and revised to adapt to changing conditions.

#### **Where can I find the school district's Health and Safety Plan?**

The latest board approved plan can be found at the school district's web site: [www.portageareasd.org](http://www.portageareasd.org)

#### **Can the school district ensure students and staff will be protected from COVID-19?**

No. All community members must be mindful that as long as COVID-19 remains a medical concern, there are no strategies that can completely eliminate transmission risk within a school population. The goal of the school district's Health and Safety Plan is to lower the risk to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while continuing school activities. However, there will be some risk to all students and staff in spite of the school district's best efforts.

#### **Will there be school?**

Yes. The school district is doing everything possible for students to return to traditional classrooms. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be some modifications and adaptations to the daily schedule. At this time the school district will operate under a Blended (Hybrid) learning model. However, in the event school buildings are forced to be closed, student education will transition to an on-line learning environment.

### **Why is it important to open schools for In-Person instruction?**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html>

According to the CDC, while opening schools – like opening any building or facility—does pose a risk for the spread of COVID-19, there are many reasons why opening schools in the fall of 2020 for in-person instruction is important.

Schools play a critical role in the wellbeing of communities. Schools are a fundamental part of the infrastructure of communities. Schools provide safe and supportive environments, structure, and routines for children, as well as other needed support services to children and families. Schools play a vital role in the economic health of communities by employing teachers and other staff and helping parents, guardians, and caregivers work.

Schools provide critical instruction and academic support that benefit students and communities in both the short- and long-term. The main role and priorities of K-12 educational institutions are to provide age-appropriate instruction and support students' academic development. Reopening schools will provide in-person instruction for students, facilitate increased communication between teachers and students, and provide students with critical academic services, including school-based tutoring, special education, and other specialized learning supports.

Studies show that students have experienced learning loss during the period of school closure and summer months. In-person instruction for students has advantages over virtual learning, particularly when virtual learning was not the planned format for instruction, and schools may not have the resources or capability to transition fully to virtual learning. In-person classroom instruction has the added benefit for many students of interpersonal interaction between the student and the teacher and the student and peers. Teachers are able to more actively participate in student learning, provide feedback as students encounter challenges, and promote active learning among students.

In-person instruction may be particularly beneficial for students with additional learning needs. Children with disabilities may not have access through virtual means to the specialized instruction, related services or additional supports required by their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans. Students may also not have access through virtual means to quality English Language Learning (ELL).

When schools are closed to in-person instruction, disparities in educational outcomes could become wider, as some families may not have capacity to fully participate in distance learning (e.g., computer and internet access issues, lack of parent, guardian, or caregiver support because of work schedules) and may rely on school-based services that support their child's academic success. The persistent achievement gaps that already existed prior to COVID-19 closures, such as disparities across income levels and racial and ethnic groups, could worsen and cause long-term effects on children's educational outcomes, health, and the economic wellbeing of families and communities.<sup>[35], [35]</sup> While concern over higher rates of COVID-19 among certain racial/ethnic groups may amplify consideration of closing a school that educates primarily racial minority students, there should also be consideration that these may also be the schools most heavily relied upon for students to receive other services and support, like nutrition and support services.

**Is the school district considering modifying the schedule to include some traditional schooling along with some on-line education?**

Yes. Despite the best efforts of the school district to return students to a traditional school day, the August 10<sup>th</sup> recommendation from the Departments of Health and Education that Cambria County schools operate on either a Blended (Hybrid) or full remote learning environment has forced the school district to reconsider that plan.

As such, the Portage Area School District is taking steps to limit the number of students in a school building/classroom to allow for social distancing of six feet. Students in Grades K-8 will attend classes five days per week with class sizes reduced to maintain appropriate social distancing. Wednesday afternoons will see Grade K-8 students receiving on-line instruction. Students in Grades 9 -12 will attend school in a hybrid manner with part of their instruction occurring within the high school (Face-to-Face) and the remainder being held remotely in a synchronous manner. To maintain social distance, students in each grade will be split into two groups with each group alternating learning models each week.

Sample Grade 9-12 Student Schedule:

Week	Monday	Tuesday	AM Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	F2F	F2F	F2F	RL*	RL*
2	RL*	RL*	RL*	F2F	F2F
3	F2F	F2F	F2F	RL*	RL*
4	RL*	RL*	RL*	F2F	F2F

\*Using Microsoft Teams, teachers will provide each day’s lesson along with assignments for students in remote learning. A camera and microphone within the classroom will broadcast instruction as if a student was sitting in the classroom. Students will be able to communicate with the teacher both during class and at other designated times throughout the school week. These classes will be taught by a school district teacher.

This model will be utilized the first marking period of the school year or until such time the school district is forced to operate a full remote learning model. The school district will adjust student schedules in October based on the level of community transmission data and recommendation of the Departments of Health and Education.

**Will the school district maintain this schedule the entire school year?**

The school district will rely on recommendations from the State in determining the best learning model for students based on Cambria County incident rates and the percent positivity of diagnostic testing as supplied by the Departments of Health and Education.

As it stands, the district plans to utilize the learning models until at least the end of the first marking period. However, in the event the State declares Cambria County at the SUBSTANTIAL level of community transmission, it is possible the district would be forced to move to a full remote learning model.

**Why has the start of the school year been moved to September 8<sup>th</sup>?**

In order to modify schedules to meet the new learning model, the school district must change both staff and student schedules to maintain social distancing requirements. In the Grades K-8, the school district will be adding sections to each grade level to reduce class sizes to seat students six feet apart. For this to occur, some programs such as RTII/MTSS will be suspended to allow those staff members to teach in a more traditional classroom. In Grades 9-12, students are being grouped to ensure students from the same households are present on the same face to face school days. The school district is also working with sending schools of the Admiral Peary Vocational Technical School to reduce the number of students in shop areas of the assorted trades. Unfortunately, these changes take time to implement.

**Will school start and end at the same time as in previous years?**

No. The district will push back student arrival times to allow temperature screening to occur at each bus stop before a student boards the bus or enters the buildings. To allow time for this screening to occur, the school district is tentatively planning for the high school to begin classes at 8:10 and the elementary at 9:00. The exact time is subject to change during the first week of school to adjust for the time actually necessary to conduct the screenings. To make up for lost instructional time in the morning, the high school day will end at 3:00 followed by the elementary school at 3:30.

**Is it possible the school district will transition to on-line learning at some point this school year?**

Yes. If transmission rates of COVID-19 in the school community increase to a point the school district no longer feels capable of providing a safe and healthy environment, students and staff will transition to an on-line learning environment. This decision will rely on input from the Governor, PA Department of Health (DOH) and the County and Municipal Health Department (CMDH).

In the event the school district transitions to on-line learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, student will be expected to attend on-line classes as per their regular schedule. While times may be reduced, all classes will meet on a daily basis with student/teacher interactions being electronic rather than face-to-face. Students will be held accountable for attendance, assignments, and grades as if in the traditional classroom.

**Is the school district taking steps to ensure the safety of students using school district transportation?**

Yes. While recommendations call for school districts to limit the number of students on school buses to one student per seat and every other row, it is not possible for the Portage Area School District to follow that recommendation. Doing so would require each bus to make four runs to transport students, or, the transportation contractor would need to add 27 additional buses to its fleet. Neither of these options is practical.

Even though changes to the school district's learning model will substantially reduce the number of students per bus, it will still require the school district to institute protective measures for students and staff. The school district will require all students using district-provided transportation to undergo a temperature screening before boarding the bus. Students with temperatures in excess of 100.4 will not be permitted on the bus. Students will be seated from the back of the bus to the front with no more than two students per seat. Students from the same household will be placed in the same seat when possible. Students will also be required to wear a face covering while on the bus.

Each bus will be disinfected prior to running each route in both the mornings and afternoons.

**Do I have to be at the bus stop with my elementary-aged child in the morning?**

Yes. District guidelines require a parent/guardian be present at the bus stop for all elementary students in Grade 3 and below. The school district is strongly recommending parents of elementary-aged children have an adult present with their child for morning pickups. One of the biggest fears of the school district is a student who shows sign of a fever at a bus stop. The district doesn't want a student left alone at the bus stop but also doesn't want to potentially infect an entire bus load of students. The bus can't wait until someone can come for the child. All parents are encouraged to have someone available for their children in the event of illness at the bus stop and/or during the school day.

**Can I transport my child to school instead of using district provided transportation?**

Yes. The district will be implementing new traffic patterns to accommodate the additional number of cars we expect to see. At the high school, students drop off will be in the lower parking lot; at the elementary school, cars will be directed behind the building. At both locations, students' temperatures will be taken before they exit the vehicle.

**What if my child has a fever or other symptoms of illness in the morning?**

The first step in protecting the health and safety of students and staff of the Portage Area School District occurs each morning within the home. Everyone should self-monitor their own health for signs of illness. The most common signs and symptoms include fever greater than 100.4, cough, shortness of breath, headaches, fatigue, loss/altered sense of taste or smell, diarrhea, and runny nose/congestion. In the event a student or staff member shows signs or symptoms of illness, please stay home and/or seek medical attention. Normal attendance requirements will remain in effect.

**What if I have a fever of 100.4 or above when checked at the school or bus stop?**

Students at the bus stop who show signs of a fever of 100.4 will not be permitted to board the bus. Temperatures can be re-checked at the school if the student arrives via personal transportation. If the student's temperature is still at or above 100.4, the student will be denied entry.

Students using private transportation to arrive at school who show signs of a temperature at or above 100.4 may be re-checked after a minimum of ten minutes. If the temperature is at or above 100.4, the student will be denied entry for the day.

In both instances, the school district will consider the absence a legally excused day.

**With the later start time for students, will the school district provide working parents a safe environment for their children before the school day starts?**

Yes. The school district expects to open the doors for elementary students at 8:00 where they will be able to sit in the auditorium while maintaining social distance until the actual start of the school day at 9:00. While not ideal, the school district recognizes the difficulty some parents may experience each morning.

**Will the school district offer an after-school program this year?**

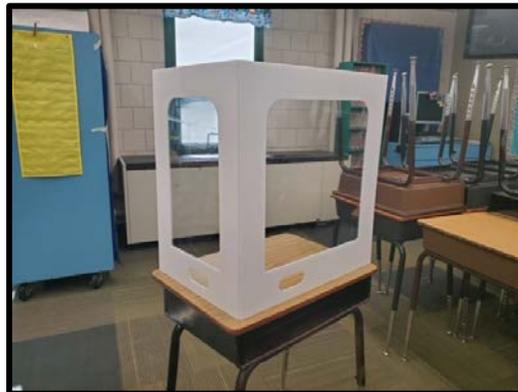
Not immediately. At this time, the school district is not partnering with Respective Solutions in offering an after-school program for elementary age students. With social distancing guidelines and concerns

about grouping multiple-aged students in one place, the district is suspending this program until further notice. The district and Respective Solutions continue to collaborate in hopes of being able to offer the opportunity to students.

**What steps are in place to maintain social distancing?**

Socialization is part of every child’s education. Learning to interact with fellow students and staff is essential for the success of Portage Area students. Given the social distancing guidelines associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, students ability to socialize will be impacted. Whenever possible, the school district will prevent students coming into contact with each other. The goal is to maintain six-foot distance between individuals, physical and financial concerns may place students closer.

The school district is currently constructing “desk shields” to better isolate students in the classroom. Made of corrugated plastic, these L-shaped shields with clear “windows” along with desk spacing in the classroom will provide additional protection to students in the classroom. Students must wear a face covering in addition to the desk shield. Students who move from room to room will be issued a personal “desk shield” to use throughout the day. These personal desk shields may be appropriately personalized by the student. At the end of each day, these shields will be returned to the students’ homeroom. Students in classrooms for an entire day will be seated at the same desk each day, thereby using the same desk shield. All desk shields will be disinfected by the custodial staff before the start of the next day. Students will be required to use a face covering when moving through public areas or when working in close proximity of other students/staff.



*Figure 1 - ES Desk Shield Proto-type*

The school district has instituted procedures for students/staff traversing the hallways and stairwells with social distancing in mind. The changing of classes will be modified to reduce student interactions as much as possible. Whenever feasible, teachers will move between classrooms instead of students. As a safety precaution, students and staff will be required to wear face masks when moving from room to room.

**Will students and staff be required to wear face coverings at school?**

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, Governor Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Health Dr. Levine ordered mandating universal face coverings in public. This order applies to students and staff within school buildings. Details about this order can be found at: <https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/gov-wolf-sec-of-health->

[signs-expanded-mask-wearing-order/](#) The school district will abide by the regulations as set forth in this order.

Any student or staff member who cannot wear a mask or face shield due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability, and students who would be unable to remove a mask without assistance are not required to wear face coverings. Individuals who are communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired or who has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication, are not required to wear a mask; however, individuals should consider using another type of face covering such as a plastic face shield.

**Can the school district force students to wear a face covering?**

Yes. Children two years and older are required to wear a face covering unless they have a medical or mental health condition or disability, documented in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or IDEA, that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school. Accommodations for such students should be made in partnership with the student's health care provider, school nurse, and IEP/504 team.

**Will the school district provide students and staff with face masks?**

As the use of face coverings has been mandated in public for some time, the school district will not be providing face masks to students or staff except in emergencies. The school district would prefer students and staff select a face mask they are comfortable wearing. Face masks bearing inappropriate slogans, graphics, or pictures are to be avoided.

Due to the difficulty of younger students keeping a face mask in place, the school district has purchased face shields for students in Pre-K to Grade 2. These shields are made specifically for younger students. The clear plastic shield covers eyes, nose and mouth and includes a cute graphic as part of the headband.

**Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings?**

Schools may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- At least 6 feet apart during "face-covering breaks" to last no longer than 10 minutes.

**Are options available if I'm not comfortable sending my child to school?**

Yes. The school district will offer several different learning opportunities for students. Parents do not have to enroll their children in a charter cyber school for health and safety concerns to access an on-line learning environment. The school district will be using district developed on-line courses as well as some provided by the Intermediate Unit. Students opting for one of these alternatives can remain a "Mustang."

Using Microsoft Teams, teachers will provide each day's lesson along with assignments for students in remote learning. A camera and microphone within the classroom will broadcast instruction as if a student was sitting in the classroom. Students will be able to communicate with the teacher both during class and at other designated times throughout the school week. These classes will be taught by a school district teacher.

A second on-line option is the IU 8's Extended Campus program. These classes are taught by area teachers using commercially available coursework. Students may enroll in single courses or a full schedule of classes.

The final option is Virtual High School. The district has been using this on-line learning opportunity a number of years to provide more specialized coursework to students. These classes are taught by instructors from across the country.

More information is available by contacting the appropriate building principal.

***If I enroll my child in an on-line program, can he/she still participate in extra-curricular programs?***

No. While the school district is taking reasonable steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, there is still a risk a student might contract the virus. If a parent/guardian is uncomfortable sending a child back to the school building for COVID-19 concerns, it is only natural to think these same concerns would extend to extra-curricular activities. The same safety precautions being taken in the classroom setting are very similar to steps being taken in the district's extra-curricular activities.

***If my child starts the school year in an on-line program, can they switch to traditional school at a later time?***

Yes. The school district recommends any change occur at natural breaks in the school year, i.e. marking periods or after major holiday breaks.

***Will the district provide students with an electronic device to access on-line coursework?***

Yes. One bright spot of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the district's move to a 1:1 technology initiative with all students receiving a laptop computer. Using grant money, the district has ordered Chromebook laptops for each elementary student and a Windows-based laptop for each high school student. With consistency in the technology the students are using, students/staff can focus more on education and less on technology issues students might experience. The school district will utilize these devices both in the traditional classroom, and, a virtual setting if stay at home orders are put in place again. Policies and procedures are being developed for the 1:1 initiative.

Because of the pandemic, the availability of technology to consumers has been extremely limited. At this time, the estimated time of arrival of the devices the school district ordered is unknown. While we hope to have the devices available for the start of the school year, it is unlikely that will occur.

***Will the school district provide Internet access to students at home?***

No. Internet access will be the responsibility of parents/guardians. Parents are encouraged to investigate "Internet Essentials from Comcast" which provides affordable internet for eligible households. Information on this program is available at <https://www.internetessentials.com/>

**What learning platform will the school district use if forced to conduct on-line learning?**

The district will rely on Microsoft TEAMS as part of instruction in both the traditional classroom and in an on-line learning environment in the event education must transition to a virtual setting. All students have access to Microsoft TEAMS and Office 365 software.

**Will there be extra-curricular activities?**

Unknown. At this time, student athletes are permitted to participate in conditioning, practices and games. Athletes must wear a face covering, such as a mask, unless they fall under an exception listed in Section 3 of the Governor and Dept of Health July 1<sup>st</sup> order. Coaches and athletes must wear face coverings unless they are outdoors and can consistently maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet. Athletes are not required to wear face coverings while actively engaged in workouts and competition that prevent the wearing of face coverings, but must wear face coverings when on the sidelines, in the dugout, etc. and anytime 6 feet of social distancing is not possible.

PIAA has recently released a *Return to Competition: Individual Sport Considerations* document to assist schools in maintaining a reasonably safe environment for student athletes. The school district is currently reviewing those recommendations and will begin implementing best practices into each activity.

**Will spectators be able to attend extra-curricular activity events?**

No. At this time, only participants are permitted to attend events. In the Preliminary School Sports Guidance document updated on July 15<sup>th</sup> by the Governor's Office, sports related activities in Yellow and Green phases must adhere to the gathering limitations of 25 for indoor events and 250 outside events. In both the Yellow and Green phases, attendance is limited to student athletes, coaches, officials, and staff only. Media can request permission to attend but may be limited.

Given spectators are not permitted to physical attend these events, the school district is planning to stream events live if at all possible via Microsoft Stream or YouTube Live to allow community members to watch the event.

**What if my child or a staff member shows symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day?**

Students and staff exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 during school hours should immediately put on a mask and report to the nurse's office. The nurse will assess the student/teacher, including a temperature check and questions about any pre-existing conditions that may explain the symptoms. As necessary, the nurse will contact a parent/guardian to arrange for student transportation off-site. Individuals with temperatures above 100.4 will be required to leave the building regardless of the cause. Until parent/guardian personal transportation arrives, the student will be placed in quarantine. Students or staff members may return to school when medical clearance is granted

**Where can I get tested for COVID-19**

Through the work of a number of entities, testing is accessible for Pennsylvanians. As entities such as Rite Aid, CVS, Patient First and Walmart offer testing regardless of symptoms, more Pennsylvanians can get tested close to home.

While most COVID-19 tests are performed using a nasopharyngeal (NP) swab, many of the publicly accessible sites are using anterior nasal or nasal swabs that are less invasive. Where an NP swab is inserted deep enough to contact the nasopharynx at the back of the nasal cavity administered by a medical professional, a nasal swab is only inserted roughly 0.5 inches inside the nostril and can be self-administered. Both of these collection methods can be a bit uncomfortable, but neither should be painful.

Additional information on symptoms and testing can be found at:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Symptoms-Testing.aspx>

**What if someone in my household gets COVID-19? Can my child go to school?**

Students and staff exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or living in a household with someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home at least ten (10) days from the first sign of symptoms **AND** until no signs of fever without medication are present for at least three (3) days unless medically cleared otherwise. During periods of quarantine or isolation, students are expected to continue their education through the district's on-line learning portal if possible.

**Will I be notified if one of my child's classmates is diagnosed with COVID-19?**

DOH or county and municipal health departments (CMHDs) staff will notify the school district immediately upon learning that a person with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 was present at the school or a school event while infectious. DOH or CMHD staff will assist the school with risk assessment, isolation and quarantine recommendations, and other infection control recommendations. Schools should take every measure to maintain the confidentiality of the affected individual.

It is the responsibility of DOH or CMHD staff to contact a student or staff person with COVID-19, inform close contacts of their possible exposure, and give instructions to those involved, including siblings and other household members, regarding self-quarantine and exclusions. The individual who tested positive will not be identified in communications from DOH or the CMHD to the school community at large but may need to be selectively identified for contact tracing by the DOH or CMHD staff.

The school district will contact local DOH or CMHD staff before acting in response to a known or suspected communicable disease. Pre-K to 12 schools located in a jurisdiction with a CMHD should call the CMHD. DOH and CMHDs will provide guidance to schools regarding disease information, appropriate letters and communications, identification of high-risk individuals, appropriate action and treatment, and on-going support and assistance.

- If the person is present on school property when DOH or CMHD staff notify the school of the positive case information, the person should immediately, but discreetly, be taken to the COVID-19 related isolation space for pick up (if student) or asked to return home (if staff).
- Plan for transportation of sick individuals to their homes.
- Contact DOH or the CMHD for further guidance if a parent/guardian/caregiver notifies the school of potential exposure by a student, staff member, or school visitor.
- The entire building does not need to be evacuated.
- Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If not feasible, wait as long as possible. If seven days have passed since the sick individual was in the affected area, cleaning is not needed.

- Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use again before cleaning and disinfecting. Follow [CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) protocols.
- Create a communication system to self-report symptoms and for notifying staff and families of exposures and closures. Schools should, however, take every measure to maintain the confidentiality of the affected individual.

## **Contact Tracing**

Robust surveillance, case investigation, contact tracing and isolation of positive cases or quarantine of close contacts can slow and stop the transmission of COVID-19. Pennsylvania's public health infrastructure of epidemiologists, community health nurses, and CMHD staff are the backbone of this work. More information on contact tracing and case investigation can be found in [DOH'S Contact Tracing Plan](#).

DOH and its CMHD partners have established procedures for timely communication with school districts when there is a probable or positive COVID-19 case. Local DOH staff or the CMHD will notify the school district and PDE immediately upon learning that someone who tested positive for COVID-19 was present at the school or school event while infectious. DOH or CMHD staff will assist the school district with risk assessment, isolation and quarantine recommendations, and other infection control recommendations.

DOH or CMHD staff will assist the school district with contact tracing and may request information regarding potential close school contacts from school nurses/health staff. Decisions to track additional health information (i.e., quarantine timeframes) will be made at the local school level.

### **Is the school district taking extra steps in cleaning and disinfecting the school?**

Ensuring buildings and grounds are cleaned, sanitized and disinfected are a priority of the Portage Area School District. Routine cleaning and disinfecting are key to maintaining a safe environment for students and staff. Special equipment and cleaning supplies have been purchased to combat the spread of COVID-19 for the upcoming school year. Routines are in place to clean, sanitize and disinfect frequently used items and high-traffic areas throughout the day to help prevent the spread of the virus. Shared materials/resources and communal areas will be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected between uses. Movement within the buildings will be reduced as much as possible.

### **Are the cleaning supplies safe for students and staff?**

Yes. The cleaner/disinfectants being used by the school district meet EPA List N guidelines for disinfecting against COVID-19. The disinfectant is approved for food-contact and non-contact surfaces.

### **Has the school district adjusted graduation requirements due to COVID-19?**

Yes. In order to protect students, the school district will suspend the community service hour requirement for the 20-21 school year. Additionally, the independent reading requirement will also be suspended for the 20-21 school year given students' access to library resources.

### **Will students be able to use the library and check out books?**

Unknown. The school district is currently investigating the ramifications of students/staff handling library materials. The American Library Association has recommended libraries limit access to electronic

resources or “curbside” service. In the event materials are able to be distributed, the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) recommends returned materials undergo a minimum 3-day quarantine as the most effective way to disinfect them after handling by staff and patrons.

For those with concerns about the transmission of COVID-19 through textbooks or other printed materials, NEDCC indicates the use of liquid disinfectants and powdered cleaners is damaging to paper materials and is not recommended. UV ray exposure as a means of sterilization is also not recommended. Placing materials in a microwave oven is not recommended and may result in fire. Additionally, the use of fogging disinfectants of any kind in spaces with collections is not recommended.

**If the school district is forced to close buildings, how will the district handle components of a student’s IEP plan?**

The district is currently working on contingency plans for IEP for on-line education.

**Will students be able to attend Admiral Peary Vocational Technical School?**

Yes. In the event school buildings are closed by the State, APVTS will provide on-line instruction for our vocational students.

**Will students participate in special classes such as music, gym, art, family consumer science, and technology education?**

Yes. The school district will clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces between classes. Students and staff will be required to handwash upon entering and exiting those areas. Hand sanitizer will also be available.

**How will the district serve meals to students?**

A particularly vulnerable area for the spread of the virus is in the cafeteria settings. Grab-n-Go breakfast will be served to all students in homerooms each morning. The school district will be instituting additional lunch periods and modifying seating to maintain as large of space between students as possible. As a safety precaution, students and staff will be required to wear face masks while in the serving line.

**Since the water fountains won’t be operational, can my child bring a water bottle to school?**

Yes. The school district has installed additional water bottle filling stations throughout both buildings to allow students to refill their own bottle with cold water.

**Will there be procedures in place to limit the number of visitors to the school buildings?**

To protect students and staff, visitors and volunteers to the buildings will be on an “only as-necessary” basis with protocols in place. Whenever possible, the school district will rely on phone calls, e-mail, or videoconferencing to conduct business with visitors. In those instances where a face-to-face meeting must occur, the school district will monitor individuals for signs of illness prior to entry into the building. This will include a temperature scan. Those individuals with temperatures in excess of 100.4 or showing other signs of illness will be denied entry. As a safety precaution, all visitors will be required to wear a face mask while in the buildings

**Will students and staff have the ability to regularly wash hands?**

According to the CDC, the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus. After use of a face covering, the next best preventive measure is hand washing with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds after having been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. It is especially important to wash hands in school:

- Before eating or preparing food
- Before touching the face
- After using the restroom
- After leaving a public space
- After blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After handling a cloth face mask

If soap and water are not readily available, use of a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol is recommended. Hand sanitizer dispensers are available in all classrooms and common areas within the buildings. Students may also bring their own hand sanitizer and/or sanitizing wipes to disinfect their own personal space.

**What if a student or staff member visits an area where there are high amounts of COVID-19 cases?**

According to the PA Department of Health, if you have traveled, or plan to travel, to an area where there are high amounts of COVID-19 cases, it is recommended that you stay at home for 14 days upon return to Pennsylvania. If you travel to one of the states identified by the PA Department of Health as experiencing high amounts of COVID-19, it is recommended that you quarantine for 14 days upon return.

The current list of identified states can be found at:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Travelers.aspx> This list as well as additional travel information is updated on a regular basis.

While awaiting additional guidance as this order relates to students and staff from the PA Department of Health and PA Department of Education, for the safety of all students and staff, the school district recommends anyone traveling to these areas quarantine for 14 days OR seek medical clearance before attending school. This clearance could be a physician's note or negative COVID-19 test result.

**Can elements of the school district's Health and Safety Plan change?**

Yes. This plan is a living document, meaning it changes on a daily basis as new information becomes available. Please visit [www.portageareasd.org](http://www.portageareasd.org) for the latest draft of the plan and responses to FAQ.

**What if I have a question on the reopening of school?**

Please feel free to share your question by emailing superintendent Eric Zelanko at [supt@mustangmail.org](mailto:supt@mustangmail.org) or completing the [Microsoft Form](#) found on the district's web site.