



WOODBRIIDGE TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Robert Zega, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

November 17, 2020

Dear Woodbridge Township:

On October 12, 2020 when our school district began Phase 2 of our Restart and Recovery Plan, the NJ Daily New Case Rate (DNCR) was below 500 as reported by the NJ Department of Health. The COVID-19 transmission rate in October was about 1.14. A virus transmission rate is the average number of people that are infected by every COVID positive person. The number of cases increases exponentially if the transmission rate is higher than 1.0. The DNCR and the transmission rate have increased significantly since October. Last week the DNCR was greater than 4,000 twice; and greater than 3,000 twice. The DNCR is six to eight times the rate it was in October, and very similar to what it was in April when NJ shut down. The transmission rate has risen to an alarming 1.4.

Our schools have seen similar increases in infection frequency during our first month of hybrid instruction. We currently have **94** students and staff who have tested positive. Of those, **63** have been inside our schools. Although we have prevented the spread of infection in our schools with our safety practices, the chances of a dangerous outbreak increases as the number of positives in our community increase. As part of our preventative measures, **12 of 25** of our schools (almost half) have been forced to switch to fully remote due to quarantining. We have over **500** students and staff who have had to quarantine.

Our district has done a heroic job preventing outbreaks, keeping our students and staff safe, and providing instruction as the infection rate skyrockets. Yesterday, Governor Murphy increased the restrictions on indoor and outdoor gatherings to limits similar to April when the pandemic was at its height. Starting Tuesday, November 17, indoor gatherings (excluding schools) will be limited to 10 people. Our schools have many more than 10 people gathered during daily hybrid instruction. The limit was reduced to 10 people because the increased infection rate has increased the chance of transmission exponentially. These guidelines were put in place to reduce the probability of transmitting the virus by limiting the number of people at indoor gatherings.

After reviewing all of the information above, we have made the very difficult decision to return to Phase 1 at all schools, effective November 23, 2020. We will remain in Phase 1 until January 19, 2021. We will continue to provide in-person instruction for our special programs as much as possible, and you will hear from your teachers if your child participates in one of these programs. Everyone else will be fully remote.

The holidays will work in our favor during this Phase 1 period. Although January 19, 2020 is approximately two calendar months away, we have no school on Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday. Over the next two months of fully remote instruction there is a total of 10 full days and 2 half days of scheduled holidays. Only 26 full days

of instruction will be fully remote instead of hybrid. We will also continue our extracurricular activities, including high school sports, during the next two months.

Last Spring our world changed. The pandemic has challenged our resolve to provide safe educational sanctuaries for our students and staff. Our premier priority has been, and will continue to be, the safety of our staff and students. It is with this priority that we have arrived at our decision. We feel that by reducing the number of people in our schools, we can reduce transmission rates, decrease the DNCR, and prevent outbreaks.

Thank you all for your continued cooperation and flexibility. Together we will get through this safely.

If you have any questions, please email me or call my office.

Stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Zega', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Zega, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools