

Westampton Township Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent

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Good afternoon Westampton Schools family,

I hope that you and your family found ways to enjoy this unique Thanksgiving holiday. We have continued to work to make the best decisions possible for our students, staff, and families as new information becomes available daily. We know that some form of stability is what is needed right now, so our goal was to provide a plan for as far out as we felt confident. In deciding on that plan, we discussed several key points:

- As always, student, staff, and community health and safety were the top priority
- Providing services to as many students as we felt we could, while prioritizing individual student needs
- Provide some stability from the “in – out” flipping of the schedule
- Ensure that any schedule we attempted, that we were confident we would have adequate staffing to support it.

As before, I have provided you with information later in this letter about the reasons for the following decisions, but I wanted to highlight those decisions immediately.

- **We will bring back Self-Contained Special Education students and some Pull Out Replacement Special Education students on December 10, back into the schedule that they were in before Thanksgiving. All other students will remain in remote learning from now until a return into a 2-cohort hybrid on January 11.**
- PreK through 8th grade on fully remote instruction.
- Special education programs that ran in-person instruction from September to Thanksgiving will return in-person starting December 10.
- All Westampton Schools and Programs, including all special education students will go fully remote from January 4 to January 8.
- On January 11, we will move to a 2-cohort hybrid model for grades 1-8. Cohort A and B students will come Monday AND Tuesday. Cohort C and D students will come Thursday AND Friday.
- On January 11, all PreK and Kindergarten students will return to the 4-day schedule they were on before Thanksgiving
- Parents may still elect to go fully remote at any time. A return to hybrid will require advanced notice to the school.

More information (if you want it!)

These were, again, very challenging decisions to make as the hybrid learning had gotten off to a pretty good start and we were anxious to move to 2 cohorts as soon as possible. As we outlined the next decisions to make, I used the following information to guide discussions:

Key Decision Dates:

December 10 – This date represents 14 days after Thanksgiving.

January 4 – This date is the scheduled return from Winter Break.

January 11 – This date would represent 11 days from New Year’s Day, which would coincide with anticipated guidance from the CDC for quarantining purposes.

January 19 – This date is the day after Martin Luther King Day and is the date that several school districts have selected to return to hybrid based on the current guidance of 14 days past “family gathering events” such as New Year’s Day.

Key Groups to Consider:

We have now been in several settings:

Full Remote: 100% of students on remote learning

Self-Contained Special Education Students Only: Self-Contained students at all schools had in-person instruction 4 days/week

Self-Contained Special Education Students and some POR: Self-Contained and some Pull Out Resource students at all schools had in-person instruction 4 days/week

Self-Contained, POR and Kindergarten: Self-Contained, Pull Out Resource, and Kindergarten students at all schools had in-person instruction 4 days/week

4 cohort Hybrid: Self-Contained, Pull Out Resource, and Kindergarten students at all schools had in-person instruction 4 days/week. All other students had in-person instruction one day per week.

We have one other setting planned for, but has not yet been used:

2 cohort Hybrid: Self-Contained, Pull Out Resource, and Kindergarten students at all schools had in-person instruction 4 days/week. All other students had in-person instruction two days per week.

Data to Consider:

State Data:

In August, our county was considered “moderate risk” of transmission, or “Yellow”. We chose to use “low risk” or “Green” as one of our metrics for reopening. On September 26th, we hit two Green weeks in a row, started bringing more students back, and planned for our full hybrid opening.

We returned to “Yellow” for all of October and have been in “High risk” or “Orange” for the past two weeks.

We know that high schoolers have a much higher risk of transmitting the virus and that very young children have a lower risk. What hasn't been clear is, at what age does that change happen? There is new and evolving data that suggests that "adult-level" transmission risks start in children above the age of 10, suggesting that our elementary and intermediate school students pose a significantly smaller risk of transmission in school.

Local Data:

(calculated from [Burlington County COVID-19 Community Impact Dashboard](#) and [NJ DOH COVID-19 Activity Level Index](#))

Burlington County positive case rate is currently at 52.6. This is "Very High" or "Red" and is the one of the highest in the State.

Westampton Township has ranked, out of 40 townships and boroughs in the County, 14, 13, and 12 over the past 3 weeks in increases in case rate. The County case rate is currently 3.07% and Westampton's is 3.22%.

We have now had 3 confirmed positive staff cases in the school. We have had several positive student cases, but none have been determined to be school-based transmissions. These situations have triggered approximately 50 students and 14 staff to be quarantined.

Based on all of this, the decision is to bring back Self-Contained Special Education students and some Pull Out Replacement Special Education students on December 10, back into the schedule that they were in before Thanksgiving. All other students would return into a 2-cohort hybrid on January 11.

This recommendation was based on these rationales:

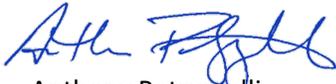
- The programs returning on December 10 represent the number of students and staff that can be brought back safely, do not put undue pressure on staffing issues, and that we have the most confidence in not having to "move back and forth" from hybrid to remote. We can bring back all of these students starting December 10 and all students would be in school 4 days/week.
- We would be fully remote from January 4 to January 11. This provides 10 full days from New Year's Day and two full weeks from a great portion of Winter Break. This is a layer of safety that would be prudent during this "surge" in COVID cases.
- While I believe that we have the capacity to bring back PreK and Kindergarten on December 10, it seems foolish to continue having them "in and out". They started remote, went to 4 day/week schedule in October, then went back to remote after Thanksgiving. Bringing them in for 8 days now would have them back in, then out again, then back in again in one month.
- On January 11, we would bring back all students into two cohorts. We believe that our experience with 4 cohorts has us ready to bring students for two days/week instead of one. Pre-K and K students would come back 4 days/week.

November and December are challenging months in "normal" times! With holidays, election day, parent-teacher conferences, etc., we are always looking for some consistent blocks of instructional time.

At this point in the calendar, it appeared best to not “push the envelope” for a few extra days in a hybrid setting. What is best is to get some consistency and some clarity for the things within our control. The virus may force different decisions on us come January, but right now we believe that we can make the above plan happen safely.

On behalf of myself, the administration, staff, and the Board of Education, I genuinely thank you for your continued support and effort.

Please stay safe and healthy,



Anthony Petruzzelli
Superintendent