

South Lewis Central School District

Mr. Douglas Premo, Superintendent

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Dear South Lewis School Community:

Recently, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released guidance titled “Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention.” Additionally, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) released “Interim Guidance For In-Person Instruction At Pre-K To Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.” These documents can be found at:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>
- https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K_to_Grade_12_Schools_MasterGuidance.pdf

We have taken a great amount of time over the past week to begin to review this new guidance. We have worked both internally within our District and collaboratively with other school districts, State organizations, Lewis County, and Lewis County Public Health. Next week we are meeting with our Re-Opening Task Force and plan to solicit feedback from stakeholders via an online survey.

While the guidance was much anticipated, it has not provided us with a clear path for full-time in-person instruction at all levels. Rather, it has come both with added flexibility and increased restrictions. For example, it does allow for a reduction to three-feet of social distancing in classroom settings in selective situations. However, six-feet must be maintained on buses, the cafeteria and at all other times. It is also important to note that if a school is able to reduce social distancing to three-feet within the classroom setting, then face masks must be worn at all times with the exception of scheduled mask breaks with everyone at least six-feet apart. Additionally, the use of physical barriers, such as face shields and plastic partitions, are no longer considered a mitigation method that will allow for reducing social distancing requirements.

Complicating the matter even further, is the use of the CDC Data Tracker Map regarding indicators of COVID-19 community transmission. Unfortunately, Lewis County is considered “High Risk” due to our total new cases per 100,000 persons in the community over a 7-day rolling average. This “High Risk” designation puts restrictions on the re-opening of schools that schools in “Low”, “Moderate”, or “Substantial Risk” zones do not have. This CDC Data Tracker Map can be found at:

- <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

Our plan moving forward with a tentative timeline is outlined below:

- Week of April 19: Re-Opening Task Force Meeting and stakeholder survey completed
- Week of April 26: Decisions made and communicated regarding any changes to the current instructional model
- Week of May 3: Planning and preparation for any new instructional model
- Week of May 10: Start new instructional model, if any

The safety and well-being of our students, staff, and school community remain a priority. We appreciate your continued support and understanding as we continue to navigate education during this COVID-19 pandemic and health emergency. Be well and stay safe.

Sincerely,



Douglas Premo
Superintendent of Schools