



September 20, 2020

Dear WTPS Families,

This letter is to inform you that all in-person instruction for our high school students (including Cohort C) is cancelled on Monday, September 21, 2020. At this time, this cancelation is for the high school only. Remote instruction for our high school students will continue.

District staff have worked exceedingly hard to prepare our schools and to create programs that would permit our students, electing to avail themselves to in-person instruction, to return to our schools on Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>; however, there are many variables out of the District's control that impact our ability to provide in-person instruction.

Our staff has been incredibly flexible and a true partner in navigating this ever-changing landscape to achieve our shared goal of in-person instruction. There are many districts across the state that have been unable to open their doors due to staff shortages. That has not been the case in our Washington Township Public Schools. I am so proud of our staff members for their willingness to be a part of this journey and give our kids the opportunity of in-person instruction.

The successful implementation of this in-person initiative is contingent upon the cooperation of our community in taking all health and safety guidelines seriously. This includes everyone: our parents, our students, and our staff. Social distancing, wearing face masks, and washing our hands are the most essential things we can all do to stop the spread of COVID-19. We are dependent on one another to do these things to keep each other safe and to allow us to open our schools.

Recently, we were forced to delay the opening of one of our elementary schools because of two separate COVID-19 cases. More recently, the high school has experienced multiple COVID-19 cases that have impacted some of our sports teams. These things are bound to occur, but if we are all doing what we know we are supposed to do, we can control the frequency of these cases, and thereby continue to keep our schools open.

This weekend I was made aware of a large gathering of our high school seniors. Unfortunately, there is much evidence to show that neither social distancing nor face coverings were in place. We have multiple students that have been determined to be close contacts of the COVID-19 cases we are currently tracing, and now have a significant concern as to whether or not students were placed at risk during this function.

My number one responsibility is to ensure the health and safety of our students and our staff. We are currently working closely with our health department to begin the arduous process of adding this event to our responsibilities related to the contact tracing of known COVID-19 cases and potential additional positive cases. This will take some time.

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**Therefore, I am compelled to cancel the in-person hybrid schedule for all high school students (including Cohort C) until Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. All other schools in the District will open as planned on Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, except for Hurffville, which will start the hybrid schedule on Monday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. All athletics as well as other in-person school activities at the high school will be suspended until further notice.**

My sincere hope is that the contact tracing results will permit us to start the high school hybrid schedule on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The high school will communicate details to their families as to which cohort will begin on the 24<sup>th</sup>. We will certainly continue to communicate any further developments.

Recently, parents of students receiving in-person instruction were required to sign a pledge reinforcing our commitment to check our children each day for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before sending them to school. We must rely on each other to keep one another safe. It truly takes everyone's commitment. We have many folks in our schools who, despite their own risk factors, are ready and willing to be there everyday for our kids. We owe it to on another to do our part to help stop the spread of COVID-19. It will not work with partial accountability.

**Together we are strong!**

Sincerely,



Joseph N. Bollendorf

Superintendent