

HUNTINGDON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT



Administrative Offices



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July 17, 2020

Message from the Superintendent

A safe return for all students and staff has been at the heart of our decision making during these uncertain times of closure due to COVID-19. We have been meeting to review many facets of reopening and doing so safely, we have collected information from parents and staff to assist with our decision making and we thank you for your support in participating in the surveys. During this review and consideration of how to best open safely, we have also identified some limiting factors that will make following the recommendations, from the CDC, DOH and PDE, challenging without the support from all members of our learning environment. For example, we know the three basic recommendations:

- 1) Maintain Social Distance of 6'.
- 2) Wear a face covering at all times when the 6' of social distancing can not be met.
- 3) Wash your hands for 20 seconds frequently.

From these three recommendations, 2 of the 3 may present some challenges beyond our control. For example, maintaining social distancing of 6'. We recognize seating on buses and in classrooms, hallway travel, cafeteria, entrance and exit of the building to just name a few will present some challenges to meet the 6' requirement. We are planning on how to best accomplish that, but at the end of the day this will require support from the families and the children if we are to return to a 100% traditional in person setting.

In regards to wearing face covering, from our parent survey 71% of families indicated that masks should be optional at school and 2% indicated wearing of face coverings for children while they attend classes. (*This survey was before the [face covering order](#) from PDE after the Governor's office message on July 6, 2020). Additionally, from observational notes in regards to our community support and the wearing of face coverings, there is a divide on this order and many still choose to not follow the order. We

are not making this a political or divisive comment, we are simply pointing out that if our children are not practicing wearing a mask now, or you as a whole do not support wearing a face covering, then that will limit our ability to return to school at the 100% rate that we all prefer. This will be an important part of the committee's recommendation to the board for our required school reopening plan that must be board approved and submitted to the state. Related to hand washing, we feel very confident that it will be accomplished, but again, we are going to need full support on all three basic recommendations for us to return to 100% of the children attending classes daily.

Data from the parent survey used to assist us with our reopening plan thus far:

835 responses (Thank you!)

Face covering data:

- 71% (595) of you indicated that masks should be optional at school
- 2% (17) indicated wearing of face coverings for children while they attend classes.
- 26% (223) supported wearing of masks by all students, staff, bus/van drivers, and visitors

We asked how comfortable would your child be wearing a face covering to school?

- 55% indicated not comfortable wearing at all compared to 6% that indicated very comfortable.

This data is being used to plan for reopening options. We asked which return to school would you select as your preferred option, full return regular school day or a blended learning with 50% returning while others would be completing remote learning assignments or projects at home (*additional information as to what will be different is currently being worked on, this will be provided at a later date). Most supported a regular return on August 27th as scheduled. Our reopening committee's have worked to establish a full time reopening plan. However we are discovering that meeting the face covering order and maintaining social distancing are two critical limiting factors.

Our current consideration and recommendation as of July 16, 2020 will include a phased reopening approach. Our Health and Safety plan for reopening schools will be presented in a manner to open on August 27, 2020 as scheduled with 50% of our children attending that Thursday and Friday, 2 days in a row, by last name and family. We will alternate 2 days of in school learning the first 2-3 weeks of school. Monday/Tuesday will be a group, Wednesday will be remote learning and a deep clean of all schools, then Thursday and Friday the other 50% will be in school. Those not in school will be provided educational materials to work on at home after they have attended their first in session learning. More details of this process will be provided in the near future. Our plan is to phase this in and assess if we are getting full participation in the face coverings order and are able to maintain the social distancing guidelines to the maximum extent as feasible. IF we are able to ensure that safety is being met, THEN we will gradually move to reopening at

100% of regular, in school learning. We will review this cycle every 2 to 3 weeks as well as work with our local EMA and DOH to ensure safety for all. We recognize this is not ideal or convenient for families and will work tirelessly to assist and improve our remote learning model from last spring. We request your assistance to better prepare your child to return to school by practicing wearing either a face mask or shield while at home and on a more regimented schedule. Our committee's have indicated that wearing a face covering will be the number one area that, if accomplished, will provide a faster return to 100% in regular schooling.

If you are not comfortable with the phased reopening, or attending in person at all, we want to provide you with a reminder about our Virtual Academy for your consideration. We have a robust high school, grades 9-12 course offering. We have expanded our middle school offerings and are working diligently to provide an elementary experience. Below is a message from our Online Coordinator, John Bilich and a survey. We request your participation in our survey to assist us with our preparations.

We do thank you for being flexible with us, as we are confident saying that by the time we get this message out, we will have further guidance from the State and DOH that may cause us to once again change and adjust our plan. We will remain committed to providing a safe environment and we all look forward to seeing all the children and staff return!

Fred Foster, Superintendent

Message from John Bilich, Online Coordinator for Education

Online Learning option for Reopening

As Huntingdon Area School District begins to make progress toward reopening our schools, we are pleased to inform you that there will be a 100% online learning option. From the parent survey, family data indicated that some supported complete online learning.

Our goal is to provide you an online option, K-12, to help you make the best decision for your family and child's education with regards to if you want your child to attend in-person or through online learning this fall.

We encourage anyone considering online learning to enroll in our district programming in order to maximize:

- easier transition back to face to face learning when COVID-19 subsides.
- safety for families with members who have health concerns related to this pandemic.
- tax dollars and resources (utilizing HASD's online programming keeps money within the district, instead of paying large cyber charter schools).

If you are interested in online learning please complete the form linked below. This is the first step of the process. After we have received your contact information, we will be in touch to answer any questions or set up a time to enroll your learner in the online programming HASD is offering.

[HASD Online Learning Interest Survey](#)

Note: To ensure full enrollment prior the start of the school year, please complete this survey by August 13, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John L. Bilich". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

John L. Bilich
AD/Online Coordinator
jbilich@huntsd.org