

Pottsville Area School District

Virtual Town Hall Meeting

August 6, 2020

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM



Welcome to the inaugural Pottsville Area School District Virtual Town Hall Meeting. We appreciate everyone joining us this evening, and the questions that we received from our community. Town hall meetings will be held regularly to promote transparent and open communication between our school and community.

Our Pandemic Planning Team and our Technology Subcommittee of the Pandemic Planning Team approached the creation of our plan from a systemic perspective. First and foremost, our greatest priority while preparing the plan is the health and safety of our students, staff, and community. Another key component of our plan is to ensure consistency of our educational program to the fullest extent possible. All health and safety plans submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) need to contain the option for parents to choose a 100% virtual learning option for their student.

Please Note: All learning options being considered are specifically **reopening plans**. Regardless of how Pottsville Area School District safely **reopens** for the 2020-21 school year, the status of COVID-19 will be regularly monitored and evaluated to determine if our district would benefit from transitioning to a different learning model.

Blended Reopening Option

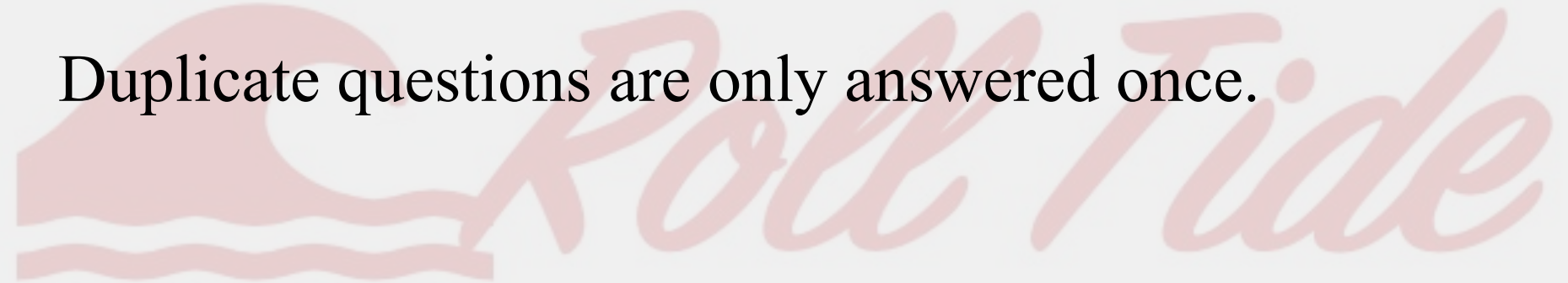
There have been numerous questions regarding the blended reopening option. Our leadership team would like to explain the blended reopening option before we begin answering previously received questions.

The blended learning option (which is one option for reopening) allows us to comply, to the fullest extent possible, with the recommendations from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), and the Schuylkill County Emergency Management Agency (SCEMA). The recommendations include, but are not limited to, guidance pertaining to the following areas: social/physical distancing measures, adult/staff interaction, meals/cafeterias, face coverings and masks, school staff and visitors, communications/awareness, responding to confirmed or probable cases, busing and transportation, and individuals with disabilities or other chronic conditions.

Disclaimers:

Questions are being presented word-for-word exactly as they were submitted.

Duplicate questions are only answered once.



1. Will face shields be allowed in place of masks?

We encourage a mask; however, according to the CDC a face shield is considered a covering.



2. Why is there not a deep cleaning scheduled after group B is in session on Thursday and Friday? Studies show covid can survive 2-3 days on a surface! Group A will not be safe on Monday morning!

Normal cleaning protocols are still in place every day. Deep cleaning will occur on Wednesday and Friday after students have left.

3. Will there be transportation for the 2 days of school?

Transportation will be provided for those students who are eligible. The Pottsville Area School District does encourage families to transport their children to and from school when possible.

Roll Tide

4. Do the students need to wear a mask continuously for the 8 hours they are there? More if they ride a bus as well.

Students will need to wear a CDC approved face covering on the school bus. Face covering breaks will be provided when social distancing can occur.

5. When will the district be announcing school opening plans?

The leadership team will make a recommendation to the PASD school board on Tuesday, August 18, 2020 at the public board meeting.



6. Who is going to do all of cleaning and safety protocols?? The Janitors??

All members of the Pottsville Area School District community are expected to follow the public health standards to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Those standards include: social distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, and cleaning/disinfecting. Cleaning protocols have been established by the pandemic planning team and will include all staff contributing to cleaning throughout the day. Custodians will engage in sanitization and deep cleaning during non-school hours.

7. If doing completely remote learning, will we get login information for our child, and will every class be on the iPad instead of emailed to the parents?

The online platform will be used K-12 and for both virtual and in-person instruction. Login information will be provided to families prior to the start of school. Students will be able to login to their Google Classroom three ways: 1) Using a classroom code shared by the classroom teacher, or 2) Accepting an invitation sent to the student's email, or 3) Clicking the "accept" button, if it is available, in each teacher's classroom when they view the classroom in the Google Classroom application on the iPad.

8. If the school board does decide to go with the hybrid opening and the learning group our child was assigned to interferes with our work schedule, can we switch it? I understand these are difficult circumstances for everybody and we're all trying to do our best to get through this but the parents should have some input when it comes to which group their child is in.

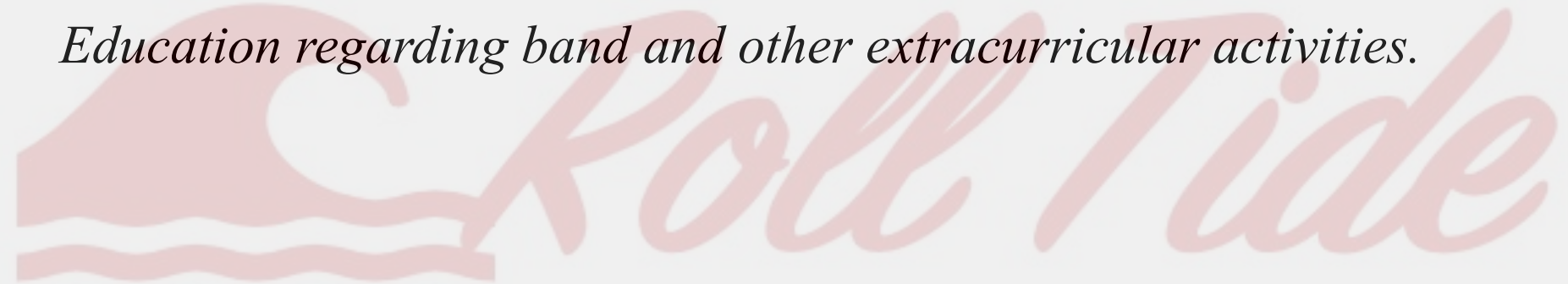
Unfortunately, we will not be able to change assignments unless there was an error and siblings and/or households were split. One of the purposes behind the blended model is to minimize the contact between student groups on any given day. Honoring requests would eliminate our ability to maintain that balance.

9. Will the attendance policy be forgiving when/if a student comes in to contact with a positive person? Will all students and staff that were in contact with a positive person be required to be home for 14 days? How does PASD plan to address the attendance policy, 10 days without a doctors note is not feasible at this time. Students will require more days to use in order to be safe.

Pottsville Area School District will remain flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding attendance. Students who are quarantining due to possible exposure, but are asymptomatic, are expected to participate by way of enhanced remote instruction during that time. However, if a child is ill with a non-COVID related illness, our standard attendance policy will apply. Students will be considered present if they are actively participating in online remote instruction. Truancy policies will still be in effect for those students who fail to participate in either remote or in-person instruction.

10. Are children still able to be in the pottsville band although they opted for online schooling through the school??

We are awaiting guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education regarding band and other extracurricular activities.



11. How will they still have the cocurriculars and lunch while observing social distance?

The purpose of the blended reopening option is to decrease the number of students in the building during the school day. By reducing the number of students, we can more closely follow the recommendations from the governing agencies.

12. Plans??

The Pandemic Planning Team has met weekly throughout the summer and have been regularly communicating with stakeholders through our website, social media, and electronic communications. Please refer to the district website, Facebook page, and district emails to review the communications regarding safe reopening plans.

13. What will the procedure be if a student or faculty member tests positive for Covid after being in the school building?

We are awaiting guidance from SCEMA and the Pennsylvania Department of Health regarding positive COVID cases and/or exposure within the school or district.

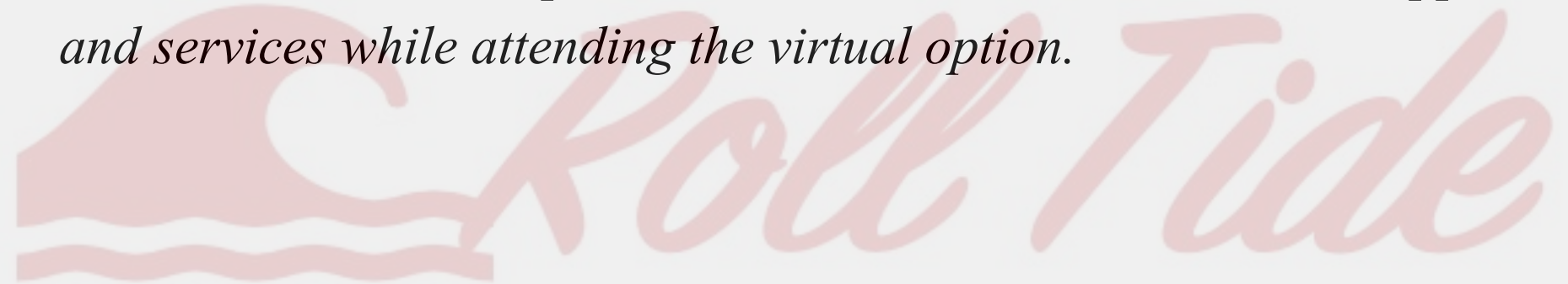
Individual students or staff who exhibit signs during the school day will be sequestered to the assigned quarantine area in the buildings and contact will be made with family/guardians.

14. How will bus transportation work?

If we are in a blended model, approximately half of the students will attend in-person instruction; therefore, half of the eligible students will ride district transportation. While utilizing district transportation, assigned seats will be mandatory on all school vehicles to limit contact between students and maintain record of seating. In addition, face coverings will be required while riding school district transportation.

15. Will my child that has an IEP still have the extra help when not there in person?

Students who receive special education services will receive support and services while attending the virtual option.



16. Will the children be switching classes or the teachers?

Staggered dismissal times will be used in the buildings to limit the number of students who interact in the hallways. At John S. Clarke Elementary School, encore teachers will be providing instruction within the self-contained classroom.

Roll Tide

17. How will lunch work?

Lunch periods will be scheduled to minimize the number of students in the cafeteria. Other large group areas will be used to accommodate and ensure that all students have ample space and time to eat. The district will also be using disposal utensils and containers so that students are not sharing items.

18. I know everyone is trying their best with the plans to open school and what not. Please take into consideration all the full time working parents. I am a nurse and have not stopped working. I have taken all precautions to come home safely to my family. Would you please consider sending our children back 5 day full in person classes? Is it possible to hire a cleaning company to deep clean after school hours every night? I am willing to do whatever it takes to keep my son safe but I also realize he needs school, he needs structure and I am not capable of doing that while working full time.

The health and safety of all Pottsville Area School District students, staff, and community members is our greatest priority. Considering this and the most recent guidance from the Wolf administration and the current status of COVID-19, at this time the Pandemic Planning Team would not recommend a full reopening.

If the recommendation is a blended re-opening, our district will periodically assess COVID-19 and maintain communication with local, state, and federal agencies. If the guidance supports a safe return to full in-person instruction, our families will be notified of the change and when this will occur.

19. If we choose the online option can we eventually switch to the hybrid option if everything is going well?

Students can switch back to the blended model by notifying the building principal two weeks prior to the change.



20. Can you please discuss the plans for social distancing on buses and cleaning of buses?

I realize time probably won't allow for cleaning between bus runs, but if a student tests positive for Covid from one school will all students in public and private schools that ride the same bus be informed of the need to quarantine?

Following bus runs, transportation personnel will clean district vehicles.

21. I wasn't sure how the school district planned to handle the contact tracing and notifications to families that are in the district buildings and those that are in private schools. Thank you for your time, I look forward to your response.

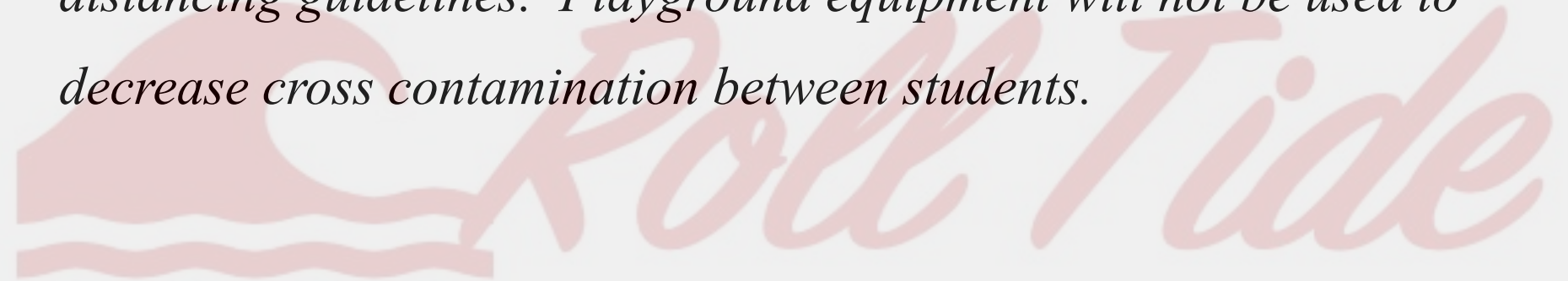
Confirmed COVID cases will result in the district assisting the Department of Health and local agencies with contact tracing and notification.

22. If and when the first child tests positive in the district what is the plan. Will there be a policy in effect or current policy amended requesting children not attend school if they or someone in their home were tested for COVID and the results have not yet been returned as negative.

A student or staff member who is quarantined following close contact with a case may not return to school until cleared to do so by the Department of Health (DOH). A negative test obtained prior to the end of quarantine does not clear an individual for return. The entire quarantine period must be completed.

23. Will the kids have recess, and get to play with friends?

Students will still be permitted to go outside for recess using social distancing guidelines. Playground equipment will not be used to decrease cross contamination between students.



24. How are we suppose to practice social distancing at school? It is nearly impossible!! And we are not suppose to be in an indoor facility with more then 25 people so what would make a school with students, faculty, and administration any different? This is highly concerning!

The 25-person guideline does not apply to educational settings as per the Wolf administration.

25. Can a decision be made sooner than August 18 about re-opening?

Our regularly scheduled board meeting on August 18, 2020 is when the Pandemic Planning Team plans to make a recommendation to the school board regarding our reopening plan.



26. Will temperature checks and symptom monitoring be done daily prior to entering buildings? Will there be hand sanitizing stations throughout the school? How will bathroom used to be monitored?

Families will be expected to follow the health checklist daily before students report to school. Staff will also be submitting a daily health checklist prior to starting the school day. Hand sanitizing stations will be available in hallways, classrooms, and common areas. Restroom use will be monitored during the school day. Hand sanitizer and soap will be accessible in all restrooms.

27. Will bottled water be available for students since water fountains cannot be used?

Students will be permitted to bring in their own water containers to be consumed during the day. Water fountains and refilling stations will not be available during the school day. Water bottles may be purchased in the cafeteria during lunch periods.

28. Will masks be available if students forget their masks or if they become soiled throughout the day?

Students are expected to come prepared with all necessary daily supplies, that includes CDC-approved face coverings. The school will review emergency situations related to face coverings as they arise.

29. How will the virtual online component work? Will it be zoom? Will the students have the option to interact with the teacher while the class is being taught?

Pottsville Area School District will be using Google Classroom in all buildings for online instruction. Students are encouraged to interact with their teachers both in person and virtually.

30. If the hybrid model is chosen, and the school is closed for a holiday or teacher in-service will the students miss that day of schooling or will another day be given to them. For example group A is off Monday for Labor Day. Will they only have to go to school on Tuesday for that week or will they have to go another day?

Students will follow the regular school district calendar regardless of the learning group they are assigned.

31. How do you expect our elementary kids to do virtual work when as an essential worker I can not be home! My older kids can handle it but not the young ones.

Virtual instruction for students at all levels will be both live and recorded. Parents/guardians are not expected to provide instruction, but rather facilitate access to instruction and assignments on Google Classroom.

32. Why can't we do what Schuylkill haven is doing and at least send the elementary kids to school full time and use virtual for the older kids?

Our blended model provides equitable access to in-person instruction for students at all academic levels. We are focused on the health, safety, and well-being of our Pottsville Area students, staff, and community. Working collaboratively as a comprehensive team, familiar with our students, families, and staff, the Pandemic Planning Team weighed all options and determined that this model of blended learning is the most effective and safe for all students.

33. In a hybrid situation, has the school been certain to put the band in the same grouping so they can practice together? If hybrid, can the students at home still come in on virtual days since they are currently practicing together.

Band members are not assigned to the same Learning Groups. The band directors will provide all members with appropriate instruction on days that they are not assigned in-person instruction. Students are not permitted to attend in-person on days they are assigned to remote learning.

34. A hybrid option only works if the only members of groups associate in and out of school. Any crossover defeats the purpose of keeping people apart because there would be cross contamination.

While school is in session, our school personnel will adhere to and enforce the recommendations and guidelines for safety. The school cannot enforce those recommendations and guidelines outside of school; however, we will strongly encourage members of our community to observe those same safety practices to ensure overall student safety.

35. If a parent is not happy with the safety measure set forth by the school, can they provide additional safer tools for their kids. You see examples of barriers between desks/ on desks in classrooms. I assume PASD has nothing in place like that, so can a parent send one in for their child?

Our blended reopening plan, to the fullest extent possible, will follow the recommendations by the governing agencies. Should a parent/guardian choose to purchase additional personal protective equipment, they should contact their child's building principal to clarify what tools they would like to provide, and gain approval.

36. Will kids entering without masks be stopped at the door? If allowed to go from door to office without masks, and they are infected, they have contaminated a lot of area.

Yes. Staff supervising students upon arrival will redirect any students not wearing a face covering to put it on prior to entering the school building.

37. Who will clean desks in the 4 minutes as classes change in high school? Will the kids do it, teachers, or will it not happen until the end of the day?

Cleaning protocols are being developed by the Pandemic Planning Team, with guidance from our custodial staff. These protocols will be shared with all staff. Teachers will have flexibility in when to end instruction during their assigned classes to ensure that time is available for each student's area to be cleaned.

38. What is a deep cleaning day?(Wednesday) How will it differ from daily cleanings?

The focus of our daily cleaning regimens will include high-touch areas. Deep cleaning days will focus on those high-touch areas, in addition to areas that have not been designated as high touch. All products in our schools meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

**39. How can you comparably test students in class vs virtual?
Without something such as making all tests open book.**

Teachers will work together to identify resources that support online assessments and minimize students' ability to access outside resources while completing a test. Many teachers already utilize such resources. There will also be flexibility in how students are assessed, including the ability to access resources while taking an assessment.

40. Do you have a connection to any testing labs for rapid testing results? With cold and flu season coming, only a covid swab will differentiate. Some testing sites take up to a week or more. Does a student have to stay out until results are in? Many other organizations are requiring two negative tests. Will the district incorporate a similar policy?

Pottsville Area School District does not plan to affiliate with any testing labs for rapid testing results. The quarantine guidelines for students and staff that have been exposed to COVID-19 will follow local and state recommendations.

41. Panther Valley has gone to ½ day in class and ½ day for virtual students, North Schuylkill has face shields for all students. What schools are you working with to come up with a practical plan?

The chief school administrators in Schuylkill County meet weekly to collaborate on reopening plans. Each district recognizes that there are unique characteristics within their communities, and plans may not be completely aligned.

42. Some schools opening have had to close right away for a positive case. Will 1 case close the school? What guidance do you follow for how to remain open safely if there are positive cases?

We are awaiting guidance from the Secretary of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

43. How will busses be cleaned between runs? Will there be assistants on the busses to make sure masks are constantly worn. One person has a hard enough time keeping kids in seats....ensuring masks are worn is a whole new game.

Buses will be cleaned between runs. The occupancy of the buses will be reduced by approximately half, if the blended model is chosen. Expectations for students wearing face coverings will be clearly posted and students will be reminded as they board the bus.

We thank you again for attending this town hall meeting and appreciate your ongoing support. Our plan considers both the educational and social-emotional needs of students from all grade levels. Our team will always prioritize the health and safety of all students, staff, and community members throughout the process. We will continue to maintain focus on these priorities during the upcoming school year as COVID-19 presents ongoing challenges.