

Emergency Management Agency



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Schuylkill County Reopening of Schools

The superintendents of the twelve public school districts in Schuylkill County have been working collaboratively throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As we continue to prepare for the reopening of school for in person instruction, the twelve county school districts remain committed to protecting the health and safety of our students, staff, and our school communities as we provide exceptional learning opportunities for our students. On July 15, 2020, the twelve Schuylkill County Superintendents met with Schuylkill Emergency Management and representatives from Lehigh Valley Health Network to discuss school reopening options for the 2020-2021 Academic Year. The goal of the meeting was to develop a cohesive list of guiding principles that each school will utilize to develop their individualized district Health and Safety Plans. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) requires individual Health and Safety Plans to be school board approved and submitted to the state.

After reviewing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, World Health Organization, the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Education, information from the American Association of Pediatrics and other relevant information, the superintendents have created a list of guiding principles that apply to the reopening of our schools. These general guiding principles have been developed in consultation with Mr. John Matz, EMA Director of Schuylkill Emergency Management Association, and John Brobst, Director of Security and Safety for Lehigh Valley Health Network. Please note that individual school district health and safety plans will address the specific details of local plans which reflect local context, and all plans are subject to change as guidance changes.

The guiding principles include:

1. We believe in the daily screening of students, staff and faculty as a mitigation effort with shared responsibility that is further defined in the individual health and safety plans.
2. We believe in disinfecting our Schools; including high touch surfaces as well as common areas regularly.
3. We believe in the benefits of social distancing to the maximum extent possible.
4. We believe in our responsibility to continuously educate our students, parents, staff and faculty of the signs of symptoms of COVID-19.
5. We believe that face coverings should be worn by students, staff and faculty within our school buildings as per July 1, 2020 guidance from the Department of Health.
6. We believe that virtual education may be a preference for some students and families and we are working diligently to make those options more rigorous and reflective of in-person instruction.
7. We believe students, staff, faculty and visitors should wash hands frequently and utilize hand sanitizers as needed, particularly before and after lunch and upon entering our buildings.
8. We believe in the need to isolate symptomatic students to mitigate the spread of disease.
9. We believe in the revision of cafeteria schedules and seating to avoid overcrowding.

These guiding principles are based on information that we currently have and are subject to change. We firmly believe that the best educational model is one that includes face-to-face instruction. Returning to school is vitally important, and doing so responsibly and safely is paramount.

Schuylkill County School District Superintendents

Dr. David Helsel, Superintendent
Blue Mountain School District

Thomas McLaughlin, Superintendent
Saint Clair Area School District

Dr. Joie Green, Superintendent
Mahanoy Area School District

Dr. Shawn Fitzpatrick, Superintendent
Schuylkill Haven Area School District

Dr. Carl McBreen, Superintendent
Minersville Area School District

Mr. Brian Waite, Superintendent
Shenandoah Valley School District

Dr. Robert Ackell, Superintendent
North Schuylkill School District

Mr. Raymond Kinder, Superintendent
Tamaqua Area School District

Mr. Heath Renninger, Superintendent
Pine Grove Area School District

Dr. Mark Snyder, Superintendent
Tri-Valley School District

Dr. Jared Gerace, Acting Superintendent
Pottsville Area School District

Dr. Diane Best, Superintendent
Williams Valley School District