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SLSD Parents and Guardians,

Today, Friday, November 6, 2020, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) released updates to the metrics that are used to determine the level of community transmission in Lehigh County. The incident rate per 100,000 residents over the previous 7 days (156.5 - substantial) and PCR percent positive metric (7.7 - moderate) placed the county's level of community spread as "substantial".

According to the PDE's guidance for [Determining Instructional Models During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), a rating of "substantial" in either metric places the entire county in "substantial" with the recommended instructional model for Lehigh County schools being a "full remote learning" model only. Per PDE, the final decision for the instructional model remains a local decision.

It is important to recognize that the Lehigh County's incident rate per 100,000 residents and PCR percent positive are two of many pieces of information that public schools consider in making informed decisions regarding their instructional models and health and safety practices. Lehigh County school districts examine other quantitative measures such as state, county, local, and individual school positive case metrics, in addition to obtaining the latest research and guidance from meetings with our local and state health officials and respective health networks. This comprehensive analysis allows each school district to better understand the data and trends occurring regionally and throughout their respective school communities.

Superintendents representing each of the public school districts in Lehigh County met to discuss this development and the challenges a shift in learning model will create for our students, families, and community at large. We, as district leaders, recognize that our districts are not entities unto themselves, but rather interwoven with other school communities whereby the decisions made by one has the potential to create a ripple effect across the county. Maintaining a level of consistency across Lehigh County schools whenever possible helps to alleviate the negative impact felt throughout all of our families.

After careful consideration, we have decided as a group that it is in the best interest of our students, staff, and communities **that we maintain our current instructional model until further notice**. We will continue to monitor the data and reevaluate this decision on a regular basis.

The Southern Lehigh Administration supports this decision as the best option to keep our students in school in person for as long as we are able. While there may be a need to move to fully remote at some point in the future, we are committed to making the change only when absolutely necessary. The six feet distancing, along with all the other mitigation strategies present in our Health and Safety plan have kept our rates of infection as a district low, and as a result, we are not seeing a spread within the district.



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In order to maintain our low rates within school, we again stress the importance of our community responsibility for taking appropriate protective measures. Avoiding large gatherings within the community, following masking and distancing guidance and doing your part to avoid local community spread will be critical in our ability to keep our schools open for in-person instruction. As a reminder, any questions about COVID-19 symptoms, quarantine and isolation guidelines, or testing should be directed to a member of the SLSD nursing team.

We truly recognize the challenges this pandemic has created for everyone. Please rest assured that our decisions continue to be made with the best interest of our students, staff, and community. We will monitor the situation closely, continue to analyze data, and make sure that any changes necessary for the immediate health and safety of students and staff will be implemented if needed.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Kathleen Evison  
Superintendent of Schools