



Lewiston-Porter Central School District

Aiming Higher

Dear Lewiston-Porter Families, Staff, and Community,

I hope this message finds you well. This is a somewhat lengthy message, but I ask you to please be sure to read all of it because there is important information about our School Reopening for September 2020 that will impact all members of our stakeholder community.

I'd like to start by thanking everyone who responded to our stakeholder survey around school reopening. We received over 1,200 responses! With so many responses, it is not surprising that the feelings of stakeholders varied. Most importantly, we saw two important themes from the survey results. First, we saw that the Lew-Port community supports the work that the district is doing and recognizes how challenging this is for everyone. Secondly, we learned that, overwhelmingly, families want to have students back at school in some fashion. This feedback served as an important backdrop to the development of our Reopening Plan.

Since my last message to you, the Administrative Team has been working steadfastly on a plan to reopen schools in the Fall following the guidance issued from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the New York State Department of Health. Having various stakeholders involved in this work was important and we also needed to recognize the extremely tight window of time that we had to develop and submit our Reopening Plan. Given these parameters, we needed to find ways to get input from stakeholders to create the plan. This included:

- Using feedback from parents, community members, teachers, support staff, school nurses, and the school physician.
- Having direct conversations with neighboring school districts and school districts in Erie County.
- Working closely with union leadership.
- Collaborating with the administrative team and the Board of Education.

Planning has been challenging. Aside from the variety of feedback, the guidance has been late-coming and ever-changing. My hope, which I shared in my last message, was that we would phase-in student attendance in September toward full, in-person learning with all students wearing masks at all times. I believe that there is no replacement for in-person learning where teachers and students build important relationships and learn together. Unfortunately, after initiating a plan that would have all students on-campus by the end of July, guidance from the State continued to evolve. In fact, on July 22, 2020, NYSED issued further guidance that compelled all Districts to (a) ensure six feet of social distancing at all times in classrooms during instruction along with (b) the wearing of masks. Since our district does not have the personnel or space to maintain a six foot social distance with all students on campus, the first plan became impossible to implement. (The initial guidance was an either/or option, social distancing or wearing masks if social distancing could not be achieved.)

You may wonder why there was a change? The answer is that NYSED responded to concerns from teachers and school staff from across the state who are now frontline, essential workers and are significantly concerned for their own health and the health of their families and the health of their students. I fully recognize this concern and understand that **NO** plan can work without the safety and support of our teaching and support staff. To that end we had to shift the focus of our planning to a hybrid model (explained in detail below) that would ensure social distancing in our classrooms at all times. We are not unique. Every district in the Orleans/Niagara BOCES is initiating some version of a hybrid return to school.

All NYS school districts, including Lewiston-Porter, were required to submit a plan to NYSED and the NYS Department of Health that included:

1. A 100% in-person model of learning
2. A hybrid model
3. A 100% remote model for all students in the event of school closure

As I have stated, due to the updated NYSED guidance and social distancing mandate in classrooms, at all times, Lewiston-Porter can only offer a hybrid learning model as a return option to start the 2020-21 school year. Students who are medically fragile, families caring for a medically vulnerable person, and/or families that simply have concerns about returning to school will have the option to select a 100% remote learning experience for their children. Families can also choose to homeschool (parents providing 100% instructional support per Part 100.10 Regulations of the Commissioner of Education) or to have the district provide home instruction using a fully remote learning model instead of the hybrid model.

I'm sure at this point you are wondering what the hybrid model looks like. The information shared below is meant to provide an overview of the plan (please keep in mind that this plan is subject to change and dependent on the Governor's plan for school reopening).

Hybrid Model

On defined days, half of district students, K-12, will learn remotely while the other half learn at school. This limits the number of students in classrooms, on buses, and in the hallways at one time. To achieve this, students are divided into four groups:

1. **Green Group (A-L):** Attends school on Tuesday and Wednesday; remote learning takes place on Monday, Thursday, and Friday.
2. **White Group (M-Z):** Attends school on Thursday and Friday; remote learning takes place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.
3. **Daily Lancers:** Includes English Language Learners and students with disabilities who learn in self-contained settings. They will attend school on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; remote learning takes place on Monday.
4. **Remote Lancers:** Includes students learning remotely 100% of the time.

All Green and White Group students living in the same house (regardless of last name) will attend school on the same day.

All students will learn from home on Mondays. In our hybrid model, this is an opportunity for teachers to engage with all students in both the Green and White Groups at the same time. It is also an opportunity for teachers to develop an online learning curriculum and experiences should the need arise to move to a full remote model for all students. On Mondays, teachers and staff will:

- Provide synchronous remote learning.
- Participate in professional development and/or meetings.
- Plan for instruction.

When holidays fall on Monday and school would otherwise be closed, there will not be remote learning on those days. Remote Mondays will also offer our custodial staff to clean and disinfect in preparation for student attendance Tuesday -Friday.

Remote Learning Option Simultaneous with Hybrid Model

Remote Lancers will be taught separately and guided by specific staff assigned to facilitate specific, online learning programs for students K-5 and 6-12. **Families with underlying medical issues or families that are simply not comfortable with a return to school may select this option.** There is specific paperwork that must be completed at each building for families that are selecting this option. **Families must make a decision for this option and complete all required paperwork by Friday August 14th** so that we can understand exactly how many families we are serving through 100% remote learning. Families who make this decision will be asked to remain in full remote learning through the first ten (10) weeks of school. Families can rejoin the hybrid model or any other shift in our plan after ten (10) weeks.

100% In-Person Instruction

Please note, if the State guidance changes regarding social distancing in classrooms or the Governor's final decision on schools (expected the week of August 3, 2020) creates any possibility of full student attendance, we are ready and willing to move to full attendance with all students and employees wearing masks at all times. The final decision on school reopening rests fully with the Governor. The Governor could also make the decision not to reopen schools which would move us to a 100% remote option. The only difference between full attendance and the hybrid model would be the requirement to maintain social distancing at all times especially during instruction. Transportation runs would also have to be reconfigured based on family transportation commitments in the full return model.

Transportation

In order to develop bus runs based on the hybrid model, we will need to know how families will be transporting students to and from school. You should know that mask wearing will be mandated at all times on buses coming to and from school. We must also ensure social distancing on our buses. It is therefore essential for the district to know specifically which families will find their own means of transportation. **We have a transportation form going out that will need to be completed and returned by Friday, August 14th. Please look for that form early next week.**

With significantly more families transporting their child(ren) themselves, further guidance will be coming from each building on the pick-up and drop-off of students each day.

All students with disabilities currently placed at off-campus sites for their learning program and students attending private schools will be transported based on the schedule established by the service provider.

Child Nutrition

Social distancing will be maintained at all times at school in our cafeterias and we have a plan to do so. Students at all grade levels will eat at individual desks six feet apart in our cafeterias on days that they are in person learning. Students eating on campus will have premade "Grab-and-Go" options.

School lunches will be available for pick-up or delivery for students on 100% remote learning or students learning in the hybrid model on Mondays or on days when they are remote learning based on their school schedule. Lunches will be provided at the regular cost unless families qualify for free and reduced lunch. Lunch distribution will be centered at the High School which is the location of our central cafeteria and will be similar to the distribution that occurred April through June of this year.

Special Area Instruction

At each building there will be specific plans for Physical Education, Art, Music, and other special area classes.

O/N BOCES/CTE Programs

We have been informed by O/N BOCES that they have the space available to socially distance students and run programs daily. Students enrolled in BOCES will be transported to and from the Vocational Center in Sanborn Monday through Friday on separate bus runs depending on whether they are on campus or learning from home.

Extracurricular/ Clubs and Activities

All extracurricular and club activities will be on pause at least through the first five (5) weeks of school. We will look to slowly phase in clubs and activities once we have settled into the school year.

Interscholastic Athletics

Currently New York State is not allowing any Interscholastic Athletics to take place. There are several plans out there from NYSPHSAA for when sports resume, including a return to some level of play by September 21st. We are waiting for further guidance from New York State on Sports.

Next Steps

You will be receiving further guidance from building principals at each level on the distribution of iPads (K-3) and Chromebook (4-12) for all students, the development of programs, locker assignments, movement throughout buildings, entrance into buildings, and the requirement of daily temperature checks and a daily health questionnaire for all staff, students, and visitors to the school including parents.

The District will also be offering a number of family forums over the month of August for families to ask specific questions of the team regarding our plan. Parents must sign up by building and these forums will be limited to 50 parents per event. Only one adult per family may be in attendance at the forums. The events will be hosted live and in a virtual format as well. Families may type in questions virtually during these events. The forums will all take place at the High School Auditorium on the following dates and times:

Elementary Forums:

August 12, 2020 - 5:30

August 19, 2020 - 12:00

August 26, 2020 - 5:30

Secondary Forums:

August 13, 2020 - 5:30

August 20, 2020 - 12:00

August 27, 2020 - 5:30

The District reopening plan is far too detailed to express every aspect in this here. The full plan is attached to this message along with a two-page learning plan summary and a one-page Student/Employee Illness Flowchart. We know as the school year commences, students and employees will become ill with run-of-the-mill colds, allergies, etc. Many of these symptoms mirror COVID-19 symptoms and we are required to be vigilant and address these issues in our plan.

This plan represents the collective work of a talented and dedicated people who are genuinely trying their very best to serve our students and their families--in fact, many of the people who worked on the plan are district residents, employees, parents, and alumni from Lew-Port. While no one wished for this pandemic, we must respond and be flexible. After all, COVID-19 is a public health crisis that impacts education, not an educational crisis that impacts public health. The district first has an obligation to keep our students, families, community, and employees safe--everything else, while important, is secondary.

I not only believe our plan is solid and affords the best opportunity to keep our employees, students, and community safe, it's the best plan to further learning and instruction. I know this plan will be difficult for families. It is simply the situation we are confronted with. We will all have to adapt to this schedule and the unprecedented restrictions that we are faced with. It's unavoidable that some will be unhappy or even angry with the plan. Many will ask, "why not this way or that way," in terms of the decisions that were made. My hope is that we can come together as a community and move forward as we all brave this new reality.

Sincerely,
Paul Casseri
Superintendent of Schools

[Complete Lewiston-Porter Reopening Plan](#)

[Return to School/Work Flowchart Following a COVID-19 Related Absence](#)