



# PINE GROVE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Promoting Growth, Achievement, Success, and Direction for ALL Children!*



*Heath W. Renninger  
Superintendent*

July 28, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope that this letter finds you and your family doing well, staying healthy, and enjoying summer.

This correspondence is to keep everyone informed as to the direction we are headed with regard to planning to start the 2020-2021 school year. Without question, this has been a challenging time and, while we continue to receive guidance from multiple sources, it has been an ever-changing process. This letter provides a general overview for how we will approach school being in session, given the information we have at this point in time.

Please be aware, as we have seen in the past few months, circumstances change very quickly and everything is subject to change. Every school district is required to Board approve and submit a Health and Safety Plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) prior to beginning the school year. While we have drafted a plan and continue to refine the details, changes in guidelines and requirements have caused us to take caution in our approach. We appreciate all of the support and cooperation we have received from our community, knowing that we are all working to do our best, given the directives and recommendations we are asked to follow. The Health and Safety Plan is scheduled to be presented to our school board on Thursday, July 30<sup>th</sup>.

Unfortunately, new state mandates regarding social distancing and the wearing of masks have required us to re-examine if a full total-reopen may be possible given restrictions with spacing in classrooms and meeting state mandated requirements for face coverings. The wearing of face coverings has been a topic of concern for many within the community.

At this time, the Governor's requirements for face coverings to be worn in public applies to the school setting as well. At the current time, students and staff will be required to wear face coverings, but may remove them when they are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart;
- Seated at desks or assigned workspaces at least 6 feet apart;
- Engaged in any activity at least 6 feet apart

Exceptions may occur for those with special needs or formally documented medical conditions that make it unsafe for them to wear face covering, but otherwise this applies to all students in grades Pre-K to 12. It is also important to note that similarly, face coverings will be required for students for the entire duration of their bus ride to and from school, if you choose to have your child transported by the District. We are encouraging families, if you have the means, to consider transporting your children to and from school in order to regulate the number of students riding the bus.

The primary goals of this plan is to be able to have multiple instructional formats available that will allow us to quickly transition into a different learning format, if necessary depending on the spread of the virus and state guidance. Obviously, there are a lot of challenges ahead implementing these plans. To be successful, we will need a terrific team effort from all stakeholders. Though our ultimate goal is to have the option for all students totally return to school every day of the school calendar, we also recognize that the current restrictions may prevent that from being feasible, and the blended format may very well be our starting off point. Because of this uncertainty, I continue to encourage parents to plan for all three scenarios listed below.



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1) Total Reopen - Each school would reopen fully for all students and staff with health and safety precautions in place to the greatest extent possible. Socially distancing of six feet will not be attainable in most areas of the school.

2) Blended Format - This instructional format balances in-person learning with virtual learning. This format allows for greater social distancing measures and limits the number of students in a classroom/school/busing environment to approximately 50% of the total reopen model. Students would be designated as a red or grey team member. Students on a designated team would be on-site for in person learning for a number of specified days and in a virtual asynchronous learning for a number of days. When students are not on-site, they would participate in asynchronous learning.

3) Total Remote Format - In this learning format, all students will be off-site in remote instruction. Students will engage in synchronous and asynchronous learning activities with a student-assigned device. A schedule for synchronous learning would differ for each building.

We understand that some families may have discomfort sending their children back to school during either in-person format, and want to spend more time transitioning using remote instruction. This option is available for all grade levels, as Pine Grove Area has its own cyber academy. Our Cardinal Virtual Campus (CVC), offers students and their families an opportunity to opt out of any of these above formats and to enroll in our own full-time online platform. Cardinal Virtual Campus (CVC) is open to all district students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. We encourage all students entering this program to commit to the program for a minimum of one semester (90 days). Due to the extreme costs associated with the district needing to reimburse cyber charter programs outside of Pine Grove Area and the financial burden that enrollment of our children in such programs has on our district and the community, we ask that parents who are currently considering outside charter school options please take time to learn more about our in-house CVC program. Every dollar we send to cyber charter programs outside of the district are dollars taken away from Pine Grove Area programs and services. If you are interested in learning more about the Cardinal Virtual Campus for the upcoming school year, please contact Mr. Vince Hoover at 570-345-2731, ext 358 or [cvc@pgasd.com](mailto:cvc@pgasd.com).

We want to be transparent in letting everyone know of the possibilities, and in any case that conditions may change which require transitions between the three learning formats. As we learned last spring, this can happen very quickly, and we urge our families to plan accordingly. I will continue to communicate our plans over the summer as final decisions are reached and plans completed. I remain grateful to our wonderful community for all your support.

Respectfully,

Heath W. Renninger, Superintendent