

Octorara Administration Office

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Michele M. Orner Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

November 15, 2020

Dear Octorara School Community,

Starting Friday afternoon and through the weekend, the administrative team has been investigating an increase in COVID-19 cases. These cases now impact the ability to safely operate the Jr. Sr. High School for in person learning. All of these incidents result from activities that are outside of the school district. None of the incidents are a result of a breakdown in OASD's mitigation procedures or the result of linked transmission of COVID-19 in our schools.

Unfortunately, we are unable to adequately staff OJSHS for in person learning tomorrow because of an increase in employee absences related to COVID-19. We are also anticipating that large groups of students may be required to quarantine as a result of the outside incidents reported this weekend to OASD. At best, contact tracing at the Chester County Health Department has become complicated because of the increase in the number of potential cases reported by Octorara to the health authorities. The system is becoming overwhelmed which impacts the ability for both organizations to make timely decisions.

In order to protect the health and safety of staff and students while providing continuity of education, OJSHS will transition to synchronous remote learning beginning tomorrow, Monday, November 16th through the conclusion of the Thanksgiving break. This transition to remote learning includes the suspension of all in person athletic and extracurricular activities.

However, the Homeland Security and Protective Services Academy will continue with in-person learning five days a week. Students already receiving school transportation will be picked up and dropped off at given locations as currently done on Fridays. Students enrolled in TCHS will move to full remote learning unless they are able to provide their own transportation. Octorara and TCHS will be working together to determine transportation options for students unable to drive. More information will be provided by Mrs. McNamara.

Mr. Brooks will provide important details about the OJSHS schedule in a separate communication provided through your child's Schoology account. Ms. Gaido will provide information to the athletic community about changes to in season and off season workouts and practices.

K-6 will remain open for in person learning as administration is not seeing the same volume of COVID related issues in the elementary schools. This recommendation falls in line with current Chester County Health Department guidance which recommends a transition to virtual learning starting with the older students when county and community numbers reach the substantial community transmission range, and when the virus begins to impact the operation of a particular school building or buildings. Administration will continue to monitor the situation at the elementary schools.

MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS

Now that Chester County is in the substantial transmission range for COVID-19, Chester County superintendents have a mandatory meeting with representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Department of Health on Monday morning at 10:00 a.m. Details about the outcome of this meeting will be provided during Monday evening's school board meeting.

Stakeholders often ask me what they can do to help during this challenging time. In order for our schools to continue to remain open, our community must vigilantly guard against spreading the virus: wear a mask, remain six feet apart, wash hands frequently, stay at home when sick, and do not hold or attend large gatherings or parties, especially if they don't include these measures.

We are living in a time that demands flexibility, patience, and grace. Your willingness to readily adapt continues to ensure that we keep our school community safe while providing instruction to our students. Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we continue to deal with the complexities of COVID-19.

Sincerely,
Michele M. Orner, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools