

November 22, 2020

This notification provides Loyalsock Township School District residents with an update regarding our continued response to COVID-19 as it affects our students and the local community.

We monitor the health and safety of our students each and every day. I take this responsibility seriously as we coordinate with our school nurses, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education and other school districts in the area. We review the daily, weekly and monthly data as it relates to the decisions we make regarding the safety of our students, our staff and our community. All superintendents in Lycoming County, the BLaST Intermediate Unit and across the state have been monitoring the health and safety of their districts throughout the pandemic.

Recently, Lycoming County has moved to the substantial level of community transmission based on the number of COVID-19 cases in our county. The county superintendents have met with Pennsylvania Department of Education to review the data as it related to our county. Certainly, across the county, cases are on the rise. The Department did not recommend any changes in the first week. On Friday, we received the latest update on the level of community transmission and it indicates that Lycoming County would be in the substantial range for a second week. Based on that information alone, the Pennsylvania Department of Education would recommend that all schools in the county move to remote learning. Remember, this is a recommendation, not a mandate. Many schools in other surrounding counties around us have been in the substantial level of community transmission for several weeks. They have not moved to remote learning unless their respective school had a surge or spike in the number of cases. Our county superintendents agreed that we would continue to monitor our respective schools individually and make changes accordingly.

At this time, we do not have community spread in our schools. All cases that have occurred at Loyalsock Township School District have been the result of contact outside of our school district. Either a parent, family member, or relative has tested positive for the Coronavirus and it has been transmitted to one of our students. To date we have had the following cases:

Elementary	1 student
Middle School	0 students
High School	6 students (2 have not physically attended our high school this year)

This is not an easy decision. Loyalsock Township School District is serious about the health and safety of our students. In the event that we have significant cases in our school district or spread starts to happen in our schools, we will take the appropriate actions. We will shutdown a school if necessary or the entire district if necessary. Our data, shows that we currently do not have community spread in our schools.

Each time we have an issue, it is coordinated with the PA Department of Health. I have asked on multiple occasions if we should close school for any reason, and the answer has been no. I spoke to our teacher representatives last week for over 90 minutes. They are supportive and favor staying in school at this time based on our data. They know that this is an important decision and I am in contact with them frequently. I have been in the schools and observed students and staff members. I have spent time in both cafeterias this week to ensure that everything is set up correctly, and we are training our students to follow the rules. I meet with superintendents across the IU weekly and we discuss concerns and the status of each school district relative to COVID-19 issues. We review daily reports, weekly reports and other information distributed regarding county and state COVID-19 issues.

Finally, IU 17 Superintendents met with the Department of Education again on Friday. We shared concerns and discussed the lack of guidance from the state level. We were informed that there will be some changes to the recommendations that are currently in place. This should be in early December.

Rest assured, I will make and recommend whatever decisions are necessary to keep our students safe each and every day. These are trying times and our employees are doing outstanding work with our students. Our students have been compliant and have done a great job of following our school rules as it pertains to COVID-19. These are the reasons our cases are minimal and we are still able to provide instruction five days a week at this time.

Thank you for your continued cooperation as we continue to provide the best education possible under these circumstances. I wish you all a safe holiday.

Jerry McLaughlin