

Shaler Area School District

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Dear Shaler Area families,

We would like to thank you for your continued support of our educational programs despite the unique circumstances we are facing related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our students and staff remain resilient during this entire situation. The district is committed to providing the most up-to-date communication so that our families can prepare and respond to any change in our instructional programming, and we thank you for your patience and flexibility as we worked through the details of the recommendations from the state and local health officials.

Level of Community Transmission (Significant)

As the District reported to you on Monday, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has identified Allegheny County in the “substantial” category according to the [Levels of Community Transmission](#) matrix. Counties deemed to have a “substantial” risk have an average COVID-19 incidence rate of more than 100 cases per 100,000 residents or a test positivity rate of greater than 10%. As of Friday, November 13, 2020, Allegheny County’s incidence rate was 138.7 cases per 100,000 residents, and it has a test positivity rate of 7.7%. Furthermore, a review of our localized data relative to the Shaler Area School District and bordering communities, shows an incidence rate of 179.48 cases per 100,000 residents, and a test positivity rate of 19.19% as of November 17, 2020.

Over the past several days, the district has met with county and state officials (Allegheny County Health Department, PA Department of Health, and PA Department of Education) to fully understand and determine the most appropriate response given the increased number of positive cases occurring in our community and county. As the week continues to progress, it is becoming very likely this designation will continue for the second consecutive week. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has communicated that two consecutive weeks of a “substantial” designation would warrant a recommended shift to 100% virtual instruction.

Transition to Virtual

Based on the above recommendations by county and state officials and with careful consideration by our Board of School Directors and District Administration, the Shaler Area School District will be transitioning to virtual instruction for a three-week period beginning on Monday, November 23, 2020.

- Effective **Monday, November 23, 2020**, all students in the Shaler Area School District will transition to full virtual instruction (Cohort C). There is no school on Thursday, November 26, through Monday, November 30, due to the Thanksgiving holiday.
- While students are in full virtual instruction, **students will follow the daily schedule (Monday - Friday) as they did on during the hybrid learning model**. Our teachers will continue to interact with live lessons, asynchronous learning activities, consultation times, and ongoing parent communication.
- Class attendance will be recorded by each teacher. No parent/student submission of attendance will be required. Parents/guardians should report **partial-day and full-day absences** from school to the main office as in previous years. Required documentation should be submitted to school.

Additional Information:

- Students who attend A.W. Beattie will participate in their Career & Technical Education courses virtually beginning on Monday, November 23, 2020 - Monday, December 4, 2020. For additional information on the A.W. Beattie transition [click here](#).
- Students who attend outside placements will continue to attend school as directed by each individual entity. Transportation services will be uninterrupted.
- The grab-n-go breakfast and lunch program will continue to provide meals for students while the district is in the 100% virtual model at three pick-up locations.
 - Shaler Area High School (main entrance at the front of the building) from 11 a.m. to noon
 - Christ Lutheran Church, in Millvale, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
 - Emmanuel Lutheran Church, in Etna, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

To participate in this program, complete the google form by [clicking here](#). Meals will be provided Monday through Friday. Saturday and Sunday's meals will be provided on Friday. For the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no distribution on November 26-27. Meals for Thursday through Sunday will be provided on Wednesday, November 25. Regular distribution at each location will resume on Monday, November 30.

Next Steps:

- Shaler Area School District will tentatively return to hybrid instruction on **Monday, December 14, 2020** for Cohort A and **Thursday, December 17, 2020** for Cohort B. This transition schedule is subject to change based on recommendations from the county and state officials and the COVID-19 community transmission rate within our county.
- The district will continue to provide weekly communication with any additional details regarding our instructional model as conditions necessitate.

While this transition to 100% virtual is disappointing for all of us, we must continue to protect our students, staff, and larger community and contribute to reducing the spread of COVID-19. During this period of virtual instruction, we continue to encourage our students and families to adhere to the state's updated mitigation strategies so that we are able to return to hybrid instruction in December.

We anticipate that a transition such as this may cause anxiety for our students. Please feel free to visit our district counseling [website](#) for a variety of resources for families. Additionally, you can always contact your child's [school counselor](#) as needed. We encourage all families to visit the [CDC parent toolkit](#) for additional resources.

Thank you for your efforts to support your students during this unprecedented time. If you have any additional questions regarding the transition or if your student requires additional resources, please do not hesitate to contact your school principal or counselor.

We are in this together, and we are stronger together.

Sincerely yours,

Sean C. Aiken
Superintendent of Schools

Bryan E. O'Black, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent