

Shaler Area School District

1800 Mt. Royal Boulevard, Glenshaw, PA 15116 • 412.492.1200 x2834 • www.sasd.k12.pa.us

Sean C. Aiken, MSED
Superintendent of Schools

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



Kathleen R. Graczyk, Ed.D
Director of Student Services

Sherri L. Ludwig, CPA
Director of Business Affairs

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Dear Shaler Area families,

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate this school year together. We know this school year has been difficult for everyone. While many of the challenges we faced in 2020 do not immediately disappear with the start of a new year, we are hopeful that 2021 will be brighter for all of us.

Transition to Hybrid Instruction

As announced last week, we will return to hybrid instruction on **Tuesday, January 19, for Cohort A** and **Thursday, January 21, 2021 for Cohort B**. Monday, January 18, is an in-service day for teachers, and there will be no school for students. As we transition to the hybrid instruction model next week, we want to ensure the health and safety of all of our students and staff. Please note that there have been several changes to the health and safety guidelines and requirements, which are outlined in this communication.

Changing Cohorts

All students will remain in their assigned cohorts when the district transitions back to hybrid instruction next week. Students in Cohort A and Cohort B have the option to enroll in Cohort C, the 100% virtual option. Alternatively, students previously in Cohort C have the option to enroll in their assigned Cohort A or Cohort B. To request a change to your student's cohort, please contact your school's main office before January 15.

Transportation

Bus assignments for students who did not opt out of district transportation will remain unchanged. To view your student's bus assignment, log in to your Infinite Campus account, click "More" on the left-hand side menu, and then click "Transportation." The information is accurate based on the latest Cohort report. If you have a concern your student's bus schedule may be incorrect, please contact our district Transportation Department at businfo@sasd.k12.pa.us.

Attestation Ensuring Implementation of Mitigation Efforts

In November, the state Secretary of Health issued a new order requiring public schools in counties with substantial community transmission to attest to health and safety protocols. As a district, we have signed the Attestation Ensuring Implementation of Mitigation Efforts form declaring that while students are receiving in-person instruction in our district, we will comply with the Department of Health's [Universal Face Coverings Order](#) updated November 18, 2020, and will follow the department's [Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools Following Identification of a Case\(s\) of COVID-19](#). The form will be posted on the district's [Back to School webpage](#) later this week.

Guidelines for COVID-19 Cases in School

The state Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Education (PDE) recommend a Full Remote Learning Model for all schools in counties with substantial level of community transmission. **Allegheny County is currently experiencing a substantial level of community transmission.** Since Shaler Area is electing to pursue in-person instruction while the county is experiencing substantial community transmission, the district must follow the recommendations to close individual school buildings that experience a certain number of positive

COVID-19 cases within a rolling 14-day period. The number of positive COVID-19 cases that will trigger a school closure is based on the size of the school. A summary of these recommendations is included below.

Recommendations for School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19 during Substantial Level of Community Transmission in the County

Size of School Building	Recommendation: Clean area(s) where case spent time	Recommendation: Close school(s) for 3-7 days to clean & conduct contact tracing*	Recommendation: Close school(s) for 14 days to clean & conduct contact tracing*
Large School Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAHS 	1-5 students or staff within a rolling 14-day period	6-10 students/staff in same school building within a rolling 14-day period	11+ students/staff in same school building within a rolling 14-day period
Medium School Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAMS SAES 	1-3 students or staff within a rolling 14-day period	4-6 students/staff in same school building within a rolling 14-day period	7+ students/staff in same school building within a rolling 14-day period
Small School Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burchfield Marzolf Reserve Scott 	1 student or 1 staff member within a rolling 14-day period	2-4 students/staff in same school building within a rolling 14-day period	5+ students/staff in same school building within a rolling 14-day period

* If case investigations, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfecting can be accomplished in a faster time frame, the length of closure time may be shortened.

** In all cases during substantial community transmission, schools should consider altering the schedule to significantly decrease the number of students on site, and public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine.

For a full chart outlining the DOH and PDE recommendations, please visit this [PDE webpage](#).

COVID-19 Dashboard

In order to increase transparency and to help the district community anticipate the need for a possible school closure due to COVID-19, we have created a webpage, which will include a dashboard, to provide a visual way to track the positive COVID-19 cases in each school building over a 14-day period:

<https://www.sasd.k12.pa.us/COVID-19Dashboard.aspx>. If a school experiences a positive COVID-19 case, we will continue to send an email to all families and staff members of the affected building.

Face Covering Requirements

In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all students and staff must wear face coverings in accordance with the state Department of Health’s [Universal Face Coverings Order](#) updated November 18, 2020.

Face coverings can only be removed when:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- At least 6 feet apart during “face-covering breaks” to last no longer than 10 minutes.

Daily Symptom Screening

As a reminder, parents/guardians are required to complete a daily symptom screening of their student(s) before sending them to school.

Your student must stay at home, if the they:

- Have one or more symptoms in Group A OR
- Have two or more symptoms in Group B OR
- Are taking fever reducing medication. (i.e. Advil, Motrin) or Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Group A 1 or more symptoms	Group B 2 or more symptoms
Cough	Fever (measured or subjective)
Shortness of breath	Chills
Difficulty breathing	Rigors (sudden feeling of cold with shivering)
New olfactory disorder (loss of smell)	Myalgia (muscle pain or muscle ache)
New taste disorder (loss of taste)	Headache
	Sore throat
	Nausea or vomiting
	Diarrhea
	Fatigue
	Congestion or runny nose

Please watch this video from our school nurses about what to look for, <https://youtu.be/iinriXTHLTY>, and post [this checklist](#) on your refrigerator or close to your door as a reminder. If your student experiences any of these symptoms during the school day, they will be evaluated by the school nurse and may be sent home.

Updated Travel Restrictions and Requirements

Please note the updated [travel requirements issued by the state Department of Health](#). Most notable are the following changes:

- All travelers over age 11 entering Pennsylvania from locations outside the Commonwealth, **including Pennsylvanians who are returning home** from outside the Commonwealth, must produce evidence of a **negative COVID-19 test** or place themselves in **quarantine for 10 days** without testing or a 7-day quarantine with a negative test on after day 5 of quarantine.
- This **does NOT apply** to individuals who are returning to the Commonwealth after traveling outside the Commonwealth for **less than 24 hours**, individuals traveling to and from the Commonwealth for **medical reasons**, or individuals traveling to **comply with a court order**, such as child custody.

Contacting Your School Nurse

It is important to communicate with your student’s school nurse in order for the school district to provide the safest learning environment possible for our returning students and staff and to comply with state requirements. Please contact your student’s [school nurse](#) via phone or email immediately if any of the following apply:

- You plan to travel outside of Pennsylvania for any reason.
- Your student or any member of your household tests positive for COVID-19.
- Your student has been in close contact with a confirmed or presumed positive COVID-19 case.
- Your student is currently quarantined or isolated due to a recent exposure outside of school or due to travel.

Q&A Sessions

We recognize that you may have questions about the district's transition back to the hybrid model. To help answer specific questions related to our return to hybrid, we will host two virtual Q&A sessions for families next week. There will be two ways to participate in the Q&A sessions. If you wish to ask questions, please join the session virtually during one of the dates and times listed below.

- **Tuesday, January 12, from 4-5 p.m.**
 - Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/95147493076>
 - Meeting ID: 951 4749 3076
 - Join by phone: 646-558-8656

- **Wednesday, January 13, from 12-1 p.m.**
 - Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/95294506045>
 - Meeting ID: 952 9450 6045
 - Join by phone: 646-558-8656

If you only wish to view the Q&A session, you can watch the livestream on the [district's YouTube channel](#). The meeting link will appear when the livestream begins. A recording of the Q&A sessions also will be available on the channel for any family unable to participate at the scheduled time.

We thank you in advance for your support in our commitment to providing a safe learning environment for all of our students and staff. We are looking forward to welcoming your students back into our buildings next week.

Sincerely,

Sean C. Aiken
Superintendent of Schools

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