

Shaler Area School District

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Dear Shaler Area families,

We hope this communication finds you and your family safe and healthy. As you know, the Back-to-School Task Force has been working for the past five weeks on formulating the district's reopening plan. Last week, the Task Force finalized its recommendations for the opening of the 2020-21 school year based on the most recent information provided by the Allegheny County Health Department, Pennsylvania Department of Health, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Task Force has been focused on planning for three main scenarios for the reopening of school.

- **Traditional Model** — This scenario will enable students to attend school Monday-Friday. Our schools will follow traditional hours unless directed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or a localized emergency occurs that would prevent the normal operation of school.
- **Hybrid Model** — This scenario will enable students to take classes both in person at school as well as online. We recognize that some families may have certain health-related issues that present some obvious concerns. As such, we will do everything in our power to provide an option that will maximize safety protocols with a balance of personal support for all children, including those with elevated health risks.
- **Virtual Model** — This scenario will enable students to learn online via our **Virtual Learning model either 100 percent or during sporadic school closures as necessary**. Students will not be expected to attend school in person. All of their classes will take place remotely with constant access and support from district staff.

While our Back-to-School Task Force has not yet finalized our reopening plans, we want to share **our TENTATIVE plan for school to reopen with a hybrid model in place**. The hybrid scenario provides our students with the safest option to return to school, receive in-person instruction, and have some interaction with other students and teachers in a structured and safe environment while adhering to health and safety guidelines.

Shaler Area's hybrid model will divide students into two main cohorts based on last name.

- Students in Cohort A will attend school in person on Monday and Tuesday and participate in online learning (at home) on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- Students in Cohort B will attend school in person on Thursday and Friday and participate in online learning (at home) on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

Students with exceptional learning needs and/or ESL services will have the opportunity to physically attend school on a more frequent basis based upon IEP team discussions.

Shaler Area will offer a full virtual learning option to all students who cannot participate in in-person instruction for any reason. Participation in the Shaler Area Titan Cyber Academy will provide students with virtual instruction by district and/or contracted employees following the district's curriculum. This option will allow students to make an easy transition back to in-person instruction when appropriate.

While the hybrid model of instruction is not how we hoped to reopen our schools for the 2020-2021 school year, the Task Force determined this model to be in the best interest of the overall health and safety for our students and staff and allows students the opportunity to return to school for in-person instruction. **Please know that this**

plan is subject to change as additional information becomes available or as is required by state health and safety requirements.

We recognize that you will have many questions about the specifics of each plan, and we intend to answer each of them as we finalize our reopening plans. **Additional details will be released this week on July 24** in a recorded Town Hall presentation that will be emailed to all families and posted on our website. Families will be given the opportunity to submit questions at that time. We will answer these questions in an FAQ section on our Back-to-School 2020 website at <https://www.sasd.k12.pa.us/BacktoSchool2020.aspx>. Our goal in sharing this information ahead of completing the reopening plan is to provide families with additional time to make necessary family arrangements.

After we release the finalized plans, we will ask families to commit to one of the two possible models of instruction for their student(s)—the hybrid model or the 100 percent virtual model. Students who enroll in the 100 percent virtual option **MUST** remain for a minimum of nine weeks.

We understand that this is a very challenging time and recognize the significant impact this plan will have on our families and district community. Our goal throughout this entire process has been to place the safety and welfare of our students, staff, and families first and foremost. We thank you for your continued patience and understanding as we navigate this everchanging pandemic and for your support and cooperation as we work together to provide a healthy and safe learning environment for our students and staff.

Please take care and stay safe.

Sean C. Aiken
Superintendent

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Assistant Superintendent