

JULY 27, 2020 TOWN HALL Q&A

This document is not intended to be a transcript of the July 27 Town Hall meeting. Questions have been edited for formatting, grammar, clarity and tone. Questions of a similar nature have been consolidated, along with the related answers. Answers to all questions have been edited for clarity, and may have been further edited for updated or corrected content if necessary.

CONSIDERATION OF FAMILY NEEDS AND STRUCTURE

Will both buildings operate on the same scheduling methodology, and will siblings throughout the District be in the same cohort?

- Both buildings will operate on the same schedule (with the traditional 10 minute staggered start/end for transportation), and both will utilize the same cohort methodology.
- The District intends to ensure that all children in a household that attend either of the District's schools are scheduled to come to school in the same cohort.
- The District will attempt to assist families in aligning their Allamuchy students' schedules with those of other students in the household attending other Districts; however we must focus on the needs of the Allamuchy student body as our highest priority. Further, we cannot control other Districts' decisions, and those Districts may not be aligned in a compatible manner.

How were working and/or single parents taken into consideration in determining the schedule?

- The District sought representation of all family structures by including parents from several families on the reopening committee. One of the decisions made by the committee was to incorporate childcare options into the plan to assist families in managing through this non-traditional schedule.

Will remote sessions be recorded so that those students with working parents can participate later in the day under parent supervision (applies to both the full virtual and hybrid remote options)?

- Students will be expected to log in during assigned times for attendance purposes, lesson delivery, and assignments.

When do parents need to decide between in-person or virtual education? How do we inform you of our decision?

- Data will be utilized from the survey which was due on July 29. In the event your family did not respond to this survey, please call the main office between 8:30-3:00.

If we select one of the available options, but subsequently decide another works better for our needs, can we change our minds?

- Yes, with some restrictions. In the event that a student/family is uncomfortable and a request is made to move to 100% remote, this can be achieved at the time of request. However, if there is a request to move from 100% virtual to in-person instruction, this can be accommodated at the change of the marking period if the request is received in writing no fewer than 30 days before the start of the next marking period.

Why are Rutherford Hall Camps and YMCA child care - potentially for a full day - allowed, but a full day of school is not an option?

- While access to child care has been provided, whether to utilize it is a choice made by individual families based on their own needs, comfort levels, etc.
- Similarly, the decision to attend a camp is also a choice. RH provides half-day camp options (a morning session and a separate afternoon session); families can choose one, the other, neither, or both at their discretion.
- The traditional school day is 7.5 hours long, but an individual teacher does not spend the full 7.5 hours with their class - they are entitled to lunch and preparation periods, typically taken while the class is doing something else (specials, lunch). Our planned schedule consolidates the teacher-student time into essentially a continuous block of time. Outside of that block of time, the teachers will need to fit in those other portions of their day, plus manage their 'office hours' to assist the virtual cohort.

Why did you schedule one fully virtual day each week?

- The main reason for selecting an option with one fully-virtual day was to provide consistency in scheduling for the families. As a regular week contains 5 school days, selecting an 'every other day' model would have any one cohort in-person Monday, Wednesday and Friday one week, then Tuesday and Thursday the following week. By reducing the in-person days to four every week, we are able to make each week uniform with the ones before and after.
- Another option was to have one cohort in-person for an entire week, then virtual for the entire following week, but the committee felt that was too long of a stretch between in-person contacts.
- This fully virtual day between cohorts allows for more thorough cleaning.

Will holidays affect the balance of in-person opportunities between the cohorts?

- In general, the number of holidays and other days off at the beginning vs. the end of a week even out over time, so we do not expect there to be an impact to either cohort as a result. However, should we start to see the balance tipping one way or the other (especially if we get into winter and the inevitable and random occurrence of inclement weather days), the District may find it necessary to temporarily modify the schedule to allow one cohort to 'catch up' on in-person instruction.

Where will the YMCA child care be conducted?

- We will be making use of the space at Rutherford Hall for this purpose.

Will the YMCA employees that will be involved with the virtual learning be certified teachers?

- No. These employees will be on hand to supervise and assist students in much the same manner as our paraprofessionals in school, or as many of our parents may supervise and assist at home. The lessons will be taught by our teachers. The YMCA employees will be an extension of the community's support structure.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT AND OTHER DAILY CONSIDERATIONS

How will students with IEP's be getting all the services that they are legally entitled to when 3 days of learning will be remote? Will IEP's need to be amended to address the reduced student contact time?

- Students will receive services through in-person and/or online means 5 days a week.
- We are awaiting guidance from the county supervisor of CST regarding IEP amendments.
- Students in self-contained classes will be on site 4 days a week.

What is the status of extra-curricular activities and field trips?

- There will be no in-person after-school activities offered, at least at the start of the year. We are exploring virtual options where possible, and will communicate any offerings once we have more information to share.
- All field trips are suspended until further notice.

What is the status of Specials?

- The District is exploring ways to include Specials classes as part of the model, and intend to provide them through a combination of virtual lessons and modified in-person activities.

Why can you allow for a snack, but not a full day to include lunch?

- A snack is a brief break that can be eaten in the classroom with minimal disruption to the day.
- This time also allows for an opportunity to break for proper handwashing.
- As discussed earlier in the document, there are numerous other considerations impacting the decision not to have students in-person for a traditional full day.

How will students be graded this year?

- Students will continue to be graded based on their progress and mastery of the State's standards, as in previous years.
- Assessments (in the form of quizzes, tests, observations, and/or work produced) will be conducted by the teachers and the data they collect will be used to provide students with appropriate grades.

What benchmarks are being considered to assess that virtual instruction and in-school instruction are equally strong?

- The grade level standards are assessed after instruction in both environments. The expectation is on the teaching staff and administration to be monitoring and communicating to students & parents regarding progress.

What is the purpose of the 1:00-3:40 afternoon slot?

- The intent of this block of time is to:
 - provide specials classes and assignments for all cohorts, and
 - allow for check-ins or meetings with teachers and paraprofessionals, particularly for students who received virtual instruction during the day
- Students who are in person and stay in school through to the traditional dismissal time will be supervised in a designated area with access to technology to allow for students to participate in the afternoon through virtual means.

Will teachers be provided with devices by the District to deliver remote instruction?

- Yes. Thanks to a generous private donation, we were able to purchase new Chromebook devices equipped with a camera and other upgraded capabilities to facilitate the delivery of remote instruction.

Will students change classrooms between classes, or are the teachers moving?

- Students will not be transitioning between classes. In departmentalized grade levels, teachers will move between classrooms.

If the students stay in the same classroom during their in-person day, does this mean they are in their chair for that full amount of time?

- No. Teachers will have the autonomy to allow for “Brain breaks.” In addition, teachers will be encouraged to use outdoor learning spaces for movement. Should weather prohibit an outdoor break, other appropriate methods and options will be employed.

Will the cohort that is virtual on a given day view the lessons of the in-person cohort in real time through live-streaming?

- Students will be expected to log in during assigned times for attendance purposes, lesson delivery, and assignments. They may then be asked to utilize the remainder of the period for assignment completion.
- Lesson information will be located in and easily accessed through Google Classroom.
- Should questions arise, there will be teacher office hours later in the day, if necessary.
- It is expected that all students, regardless of in-person or virtual, will follow the given schedule for that day.

For teachers and therapists that don't have adequate internet will they be provided a way to fix that issue?

- With the hybrid program, students will receive some therapies while in school.
- Services may also be delivered through teleservices.
- If in-school is not an option for whatever reason, therapists can utilize the school building so that internet is not an issue - as long as we don't go back to stage 1 of the pandemic.

If we decide to choose the 100% remote learning will my child still have access to their teacher's lessons on a daily basis? Or will everything fall on the parents back to teach their child?

- They will have access to classroom materials and lessons through Google Classroom.
- It should be noted that it is not the intent of distance/remote learning to be equated with homeschooling. The District's remote learning plan will continue to be one whereby students are completing lessons and work at the direction of their teacher, with opportunities to ask for and receive feedback or additional support from that teacher. It is ultimately the responsibility of the District to provide these resources and opportunities, in conjunction with the families' responsibility to make the child available for school, whatever the format.
 - Note regarding ‘making the child available’: we have customarily used that phrase simply to mean making sure your child gets to school each day. We understand that in order to make a child available for remote learning may require technological and other resources that may cause hardship on the family. If your family requires assistance to obtain adequate technology or technological services, please reach out to the District, as we have access to resources that may help you.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ON CAMPUS

What are the cleaning protocols?

- The buildings will be thoroughly cleaned each evening.
- Wednesday will be used to do additional deep cleaning between the 2 cohorts, as well as Friday evening and weekends if needed.
- At the end of each school day, classrooms and other spaces will undergo fog or spray disinfecting.
- Each classroom will be equipped with supplies.
- Buses will be disinfected between runs.
- At all times, we will adhere to current cleaning practices and protocols under the guidance from local health authorities.

Will students be allowed to have water bottles to account for the water fountains being taken out of commission and the potential heat issues in some of the classrooms?

- Water bottles from home will be permitted and encouraged.
- With regards to the heat, the abbreviated schedule will have students being dismissed before it gets too hot; further, fans can also be used to circulate the air and provide cooling

Will the classrooms and other learning spaces be air-conditioned?

- There are currently a number of areas on campus that are air-conditioned, and unfortunately there are some that are not. The status of rooms with or without air-conditioning has not changed from last year. As mentioned above, we are hopeful that the abbreviated schedule and other accommodations will minimize the opportunity for excessive heat to impact the school day.

What is the protocol if/when an ATS staff member and/or student tests positive for COVID 19?

- Based upon the current guidance from the Warren County Department of Health (subject to change at any time), in the event of a confirmed case among students and/or faculty:
 - May recommend school-wide virtual instruction for a day to allow the WCDOH to complete contact tracing investigation.
 - Quarantine all students and faculty in class or on bus with a confirmed case for 14 days.
 - Confirmed case will isolate for at least 10 days and that they have been fever free for at least 24 hours as per existing guidance.

Will the students still have lockers?

- A final decision has not been made at this time, but the current plan is for students to go to one room for their instruction for the day and keep their belongings with them in their individualized space in that room.

Please discuss contact tracing, especially as it relates to a non-Allamuchy student who utilizes an Allamuchy bus and is found to have a positive test result.

- All contact tracing, regardless of origin, will be conducted by the health department. We are responsible for collecting and providing attendance information for our buildings and buses. It is currently our intent to use the extra vehicles in our fleet to maintain separate buses for Allamuchy students and those of other districts to every extent possible.

Will the District test for COVID-19?

- Not at this time.

Who will be required to wear masks or face coverings?

- The guidance from the health department is all people in the building wear masks at all times.
- When necessary, accommodations are made as part of an IEP, a 504, or a health plan.

Will parent volunteers be permitted in the building?

- Not at this time. Building access will be restricted to staff and students only.

If a student stays home sick with any symptoms, even if just a simple cold or fever, will they be required to get tested before returning to school?

- Current guidance from the health department recommends a doctor's note to help to expedite the process of return, and to be fever free for 24 hours. (NOTE- this recommendation changed since the town hall meeting.)
- Detailed procedures to be finalized and shared, but are subject to change based upon guidance from CDC and WC Health dept.
- The District acknowledges that this is more restrictive than traditional practices, however in light of the pandemic, we have been advised to approach these symptoms with an abundance of caution.

Will our Substitutes also be working at other Districts?

- Many Substitutes rely on having relationships with numerous Districts to assure steady work, but we are looking into ways to secure certain substitute teachers so that we can limit their exposure to other Districts.

FINANCES

What is the financial shortfall between state/federal funding and the expected cost of these additional needs due to COVID regulations and safety precautions to get students back to school in-person?

- While there may be some “per student” costs of the pandemic that have been circulating, those estimates are just that - estimates, and may not be the same for every District.
- As a small District, we are well-versed in ‘doing more with less.’ Throughout the development of the hybrid plan, we have been looking at how our existing staff and resources are being used, and how certain staff may be redeployed to fill roles in lieu of their usual responsibilities in a traditional schedule.
- We are continually monitoring our financial position, to quantify savings opportunities, additional expense needs, and frugally managing the ‘wants’ vs. the ‘needs’ of our budget.

TRANSPORTATION

Will Allamuchy buses still be used to serve other local districts?

- Yes, we plan to continue to use our buses to serve other districts - it’s a source of revenue to us, which goes to support the funding of our general budget.
- Further, we are trying to structure our routes so that one bus is dedicated to one of the districts, and a second bus is dedicated to the other. However, regardless of whose students are on the bus, they will be disinfected between runs.

What happens if we decide to drive our student to school, but there is an issue and we need our student to use the bus occasionally?

- Please contact the District and we can discuss such situations on a case-by-case basis.

OTHER QUESTIONS

Will there be an in person orientation for kindergarten?

- Orientation for parents was held virtually in June.
- Kindergarten Countdown 2020 is still in the planning phase, but we are looking to provide our incoming kindergarteners with a smooth transition to the District.

When creating the options for the hybrid model, what other school districts did Allamuchy look towards for data?

- Each administrator is a member of their applicable local (Warren, Sussex, and Hunterdon counties) and professional organizations (Superintendents, Principals, Business Officials), and these groups have been meeting regularly to share ideas and best practices.

When will we receive supply lists for the upcoming year?

- The supply lists are being reviewed to address the hybrid environment; we hope to have those out by early August.