



August 20, 2020

SLSD Community,

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The Southern Lehigh School District continues to process through an evolving stream of guidance and recommendations from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH). The ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic has presented our entire region in making difficult decisions potentially having lasting effects that extend beyond the boundaries of our schools. As a District, we continue to recognize our community's desire to preserve as close to a typical educational experience as possible for all students. Navigating the many facets of a global pandemic, while focusing on work and school schedules, has left many within our community struggling to find a balance between individual health and safety and stability for their own family.

The faculty and staff of the Southern Lehigh School District are also struggling with a myriad of changing individual circumstances that present challenges to return to in person instruction, including many changes to school and child care schedules. This has left a significant number of our staff needing to make the difficult decision to request a leave under the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act. When we factor in other absences on a daily basis for routine illnesses and the need to isolate due to COVID exposures, and the daily health screener requirements to stay home when common symptoms are present, our ability to cover those positions is significantly limited. While we have been fortunate to have many wonderful substitutes at Southern Lehigh, there simply are not enough to cover the range of positions, particularly with certification requirements. Every district across the area will also be searching for substitutes, increasing demand for all.

Our need is greatest at the secondary level, where despite our best efforts we have been unable to secure substitutes for critical positions. Unfortunately, as a result, due to the significant reduction in staffing levels and the inability to secure enough substitutes to adequately provide supervision and instruction, the Southern Lehigh School District will be recommending an adjustment to the Health and Safety Plan where **all students in grades 7 - 12** will start the school year in a 100% fully remote instructional model until the end of the first marking period on November 4th. The administration will continue to assess our staffing situation, K-12, and seek out solutions to ensure the reopening of our schools and the operation of a safe environment while providing the best possible education for all of our students.

As of today, the District does plan to continue to **follow the Hybrid Learning model for grades K-6.**

We do need to be aware that depending on daily absence rates, we may need to close individual buildings with short notice due to lack of staffing on any given day, particularly as we move further into seasonal illness seasons. We realize this is extremely challenging for our families, but the safety of our students is the most important factor and we must have enough staff to ensure that safety.



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Further communication will be forthcoming that will outline more specific details, such as information regarding student schedules, district transportation, special education, etc.

We understand that this decision will be viewed as a disruption for our families and are empathetic to the disappointment that our students will experience as a result. This decision was not made lightly. The challenges that we continue to face are unprecedented and the District will continue to do our best during these unprecedented times in a manner that supports the health and safety of all of our students.

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