



PENNCREST

EMPOWERING LIFE-LONG LEARNERS

July 9, 2020

Summer 2020 Update

Dear PENNCREST Students and Families,

Monday, we opened our schools for summer marching band and athletic practices. This was the first day since March 12, 2020 students were on campus. It is great to be back!

Over the past two months we have spent a great deal of time and attention to the unenviable task of planning for a safe, and reasonably normal, return to school. Since March 2020, the Board of School Directors and school officials have collaborated with regional health officials, emergency management, and Northwest PA educational leaders to develop guidance on how to successfully educate students during the COVID-19 pandemic school disruption. Over the past month we have regularly met with parents and employees, and surveyed students, parents and staff members to gather thoughts and ideas about the 2020-2021 school year. **Our required Health and Safety Plan will be approved by the School Board on August 13 and a draft of the plan will be released for public consumption on July 21, provided there are few changes in guidance.** It is not reasonable to expect our plan will meet the approval of every student, parent and resident. Many families and employees will be required to make difficult decisions with respect to returning to our schools this fall. Please reach out to me (tglasspool@penncrest.org / 814-337-1600) or any administrator with questions, concerns, thoughts and ideas. We are here for you.

While health and safety conditions are paramount, **our Health and Safety Plan will be rooted in the understanding and belief that social interaction and in-person instruction is essential to our students' well-being and their academic growth and development.** Our plan will be flexible and adaptable should an outbreak occur; however, our community has experienced a low prevalence of COVID-19. Our plan will be a long-term approach that will treat COVID-19 similarly to other contagious diseases that commonly occur in schools. Several NWPA school districts have publicized their plans for the return to school. We are still gathering input from our community. The start of school is seven weeks away and a lot can change, and has changed as recently as July 3 with the requiring of masks/face coverings. Nonetheless, we want to share some aspects of our plan and points of discussion with you to assist with your preparation and decision making.

Our goal is to operate our schools as close to the "old normal" (green phase) as possible for the entire school year. In order to have a successful school year we need clear home-school communication, flexibility, and a steadfast commitment to keeping sick individuals out of our schools. Misinformation may cause widespread student and staff absence or mistreatment of individuals. Rumors regarding

COVID-19 cases or potentially sick individuals have no place in our community. It is our collective responsibility to remain calm, support each other, and demonstrate our resolve.

The following information is still in discussion and will require approval by the Board of School Directors.

The following is not final

At this time, the PA Department of Health and the Governor will dictate the phase of Crawford County.

Green Phase considerations

The green phase refers to everyone physically returning to school with reasonable CDC health and safety guidelines in place.

Screening

- **Stay home if you are sick, ill or unwell.** We cannot stress this enough. Schools will be flexible with the number of student absences.
- Parents will screen students each morning prior to the school day. Symptomatic students will not be sent on the bus or brought to school.
- District staff will screen themselves prior to leaving for work and stay home if symptomatic.
- Daily temperature checks will occur for students and staff.
- Students and staff who become symptomatic during the school day shall immediately report to the school's extra care room (separate isolation area).
- Visitors are not permitted past the main office without explicit permission from the principal. All visitors must wear a mask or face covering and have a temperature screening.

Masks or Face Coverings

- **We will not tolerate mask shaming in the PENNCREST School District.**
- Wearing a mask may or may not be required in school during the "green phase". We will follow the [guidance from the PA Department of Health](#).
 - Students are required to wear a mask while they ride on a school bus.
- Students and staff are required to have a mask or face covering with them while at school to use if they become symptomatic or to protect themselves and others if unable to social distance.
 - We will provide all students and staff with face covering options.
- Students are strongly encouraged to wear a mask when they cannot social distance. This includes entrance and exit of school, in the hallways, etc.

Exceptions: Masks or face coverings are not required by any student or staff member with a medical condition, children under the age of 2, individuals communicating with someone who is hearing impaired, individuals unable to remove a mask, or when the activity is prohibitive or dangerous. Documentation of a medical condition is not required. **No individual has the right to ask a student or staff member the reason why he or she is not wearing a mask.**

Physical or Social Distancing

- Six-foot social distance of classroom seating is not required. Teachers will remove most of the non-essential furniture from classrooms and will maximize space to distance student desks. Classrooms will also be reconfigured to limit students facing each other. The [World Health Organization](#) and [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) recommend a minimum social distance of three feet, claiming the three-foot distance is associated with a large reduction in droplet spread.
- Hallway travel, cafeterias, common areas, spectators at events, and recess will be altered to increase separation of individuals.

Personal Hygiene

- We have purchased additional hand sanitizer, hand soap, paper towels and similar items.
- We will schedule handwashing in primary grades and require all students to wash or sanitize when entering and exiting the school, before and after lunch, and before and after use of common areas, such as the library.
- Restrooms will be checked routinely to ensure sanitizing and that handwashing supplies are available.

Disinfecting

- We have purchased additional cleaners, disinfectants, garbage bags and similar items.
- Custodial staffing schedules will be rearranged to ensure that high touch areas are disinfected routinely during the school day.
- Water fountains will be turned off. Students are encouraged to bring water from home. We have purchased 2 bottle filling stations per school.

Education and Training

- Students and staff will be educated and regularly reminded of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- Educational material will be posted in common areas.
- Support staff will receive specific COVID-19 job related training with respect to disinfecting, food service, transportation, etc...
- Proper handwashing will be taught/reviewed at the beginning of every grading quarter.

Yellow Phase considerations

The yellow phase refers to a spike of COVID-19 cases in our area. To reduce the possibility of spread of the disease, we will be required to reduce the amount of people in our schools on a daily basis. During this phase our schools will be closed to all individuals outside of the normal school day of 8:00am to 3:00pm, and athletic and extra-curricular activities will cease.

Red Phase considerations

The Red phase refers to the need to shut down our facilities for the health and safety of our community. All instruction will be delivered online and our schools will be physically closed and quarantined. We have taken several steps to increase the quality of instruction, support and resources.

Virtual instruction for 20-21 school year is not the same as the pandemic education that occurred this Spring. Expectations for all will be clearly defined and explained prior to the possibility of entering the red phase. We have purchased new equipment and programs with grant funding and have expanded professional development opportunities for faculty. I am extremely proud of our teachers' efforts to sharpen their skills in preparation for this possibility. Unlike the mandatory March 13th closure, we have time to prepare should the Commonwealth force Crawford County into the Red Phase. On a positive note, with our polished skills and technology prowess, PENNCREST may never have another snow day.

[The PENNCREST Cyber Academy](#)

We understand that some families are not comfortable returning to school until there is a proven and widely available vaccine. The PENNCREST Cyber Academy provides an alternative educational experience that is 100% online. Unlike other cyber programs we have dedicated teachers who operate a drop-in center at Saegertown Elementary School. We are currently exploring the possibility of expanding the Academy to include a drop-in center at Maplewood Elementary School. Please contact Assistant Superintendent Ken Newman at knewman@penncrest.or or 814-337-1600 for more information.

Your cooperation, understanding and support are appreciated. Continue to have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

Dr. Timothy S. Glasspool

Superintendent