

2019 CORONAVIRUS

Valley schools to stay open amid outbreak

District leaders met at CSIU

From staff reports

All Valley school districts will remain open and district officials will continue to implement hygiene protocols, according to 16 Valley school superintendents following recommendations from health and emergency management officials.

Response to COVID-19, the novel coronavirus that has sickened more than 100,000 people globally and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on Wednesday, was part of the Superintendent's Advisory Council's monthly meet-

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Robert Inglis/The Daily Item

Shikellamy High School custodian Cathy Fenstermacher sprays down a cafeteria table with a disinfectant cleaner on Wednesday afternoon.

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ing Wednesday at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit. The superintendents then sent out a joint release following the event.

After reviewing "all of the most current recommendations" from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Pennsylvania Department of Health, district officials also met with local health and emergency officials.

"The clear recommendation is to keep our public schools open and to instruct all of the staff, parents and students in the most effective handwashing and hygiene protocols," according to the release. "District leadership understands that information and recommendations are changing rapidly and are committed to staying informed

and maintaining excellent communication with one another and the public."

Additionally, school officials said field trips, performances and travel to events and other competitions are being considered on a case-by-case basis. "Districts are also adopting opt-out recommendations for families concerned about their students' gathering in large groups or traveling," the statement noted. "Additional hygiene precautions and protocols are being enforced for these types of activities."

Line Mountain Superintendent Dave Campbell said his district is taking precautions at the two buildings in Trevorton and Mandata. He said tips and precautions are part of morning announcements in the middle/high school. In the elementary school, discussions are held with students during the morning meeting.

Each classroom has a wall-

mounted sanitizer dispenser. Custodians will disinfect all desks and door handles every night. Disinfectant wipes are available in every room for students wishing to wipe their desk any time, he said. In general, more hand sanitizers throughout the buildings are being planned, he said.

"In both cafeterias, tables are now to be cleaned with disinfectant twice a day, meaning before and after second lunch," Campbell said. "We also remind students to use hand sanitizer at the beginning of each lunch line.

"We are just talking to kids about it, such as washing hands more regularly and vigorously, (using) hand sanitizer and coughing/sneezing in the crook of their arm," said Campbell.

Midd-West School District has hand sanitation stations but is finding it hard to get refills, said Superintendent Rick Muselman.

The district offers daily updates from the CDC on its webpage and officials check daily with the state Department of Health, he said.

As far as closing school, Muselman said the administration has discussed options and is making plans in case it comes to that outcome.

"Law requires 180 school days before June 30. With no snow days used this year, we have plenty of time to meet our 180 required school days. Using technology is an option but that hasn't been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and (opens up) questions on contracts and meeting special needs."

Danville Area School District students won't be going on any out-of-state or overnight trips, at least for now, because of the coronavirus threat, the school board decided on Wednesday night.

Superintendent Ricki Boyle

said she would decide on whether the district should consider the trips on a case-by-case basis.

The board put off a vote at the meeting on whether to approve an out-of-state senior class trip May 22 to Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Approximately 60 students and six adults were planning to go.

"If your child is sick, please keep your child home," Boyle advised parents.

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