



Cornwall Central School District

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April 16, 2021

Dear CCSD Students, Staff and Families,

As we close the end of the first full week of in-person instruction on the elementary level, we wanted to share that it has been going great, and we love seeing our K-4 students daily! The students, faculty and staff have assimilated to the new procedures, routines and are enjoying their classes at full capacity.

We are extremely pleased to share another important update at this time. Superintendents across Orange and Ulster counties all participated in a webinar that was run by the New York State Department of Health on Wednesday. **Our joint understanding from that meeting is that we can indeed switch to quarantine of close contacts only moving forward.** The direct quote from the webinar is as follows, "*Contact tracing will look for individuals who have been within 6 feet of a case for at least 10 minutes in a 24 hour period, even if masks are properly worn. So that should be taken into consideration as school districts update their plans.*" Dr. Gelman has repeatedly stated that she is following state guidance on quarantines and this update is directly from the state health department.

In previous correspondence, we've shared that reopening fully on the secondary level is targeted for April 26th, pending community transmission rates. We continue to plan with this mindset but also need to share critical information released from the NY State Department of Health late last Friday, which will play a major role in what reopening fully may look like.

Based on this new guidance, due to evidence that transmission risk ranges by the age of the student, the CDC recommends that physical distancing requirements differ by grade level and community transmission risk. Evidence indicates that there is lower susceptibility and incidence of COVID-19 among younger children than compared to teenagers; therefore, in-person instruction represents less risk of on-site transmission in elementary schools compared to middle and high schools.

Indicators of Community Transmission

The CDC recommends the use of **two measures of community burden** to determine the level of risk of transmission: **total number of new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days, and percentage positive rate during the last 7 days.** **If the two indicators suggest different levels, the actions corresponding to the higher threshold should be chosen.** The transmission level for any given location changes over time and will be reassessed weekly in order to continuously inform planning and decision-making.

What are the levels of indicators and threshold for community transmission of COVID-19?

- **In counties with low and moderate risk of transmission**, elementary, middle, and high schools can maintain physical distancing of at least three feet between students in classrooms.
- **In counties with substantial risk of transmission**, elementary, middle, and high schools can maintain physical distancing of at least three feet between students in classrooms and cohorting is recommended when possible.
- **In counties with high risk of transmission**, elementary schools can maintain physical distancing of at least three feet between students in classrooms and cohorting is recommended when possible. However, in middle and high schools three feet between students in classrooms is recommended only when schools can use cohorting. **When schools cannot maintain cohorting, middle and high schools must maintain physical distancing of at least six feet between students in classrooms.**

Link for CDC COVID Tracker: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

What does this mean for our re-opening on the secondary level as of April 26th?

Orange County is currently between 200 and 500 reported cases per 100,000 population. This is considered "High Transmission." Based on the guidance above, we are still permitted to maintain our current five day of in-person instruction on the elementary level **and can also implement this model in 5th and 6th grade**, but cannot for Grades 7-12.

Why are 5th & 6th grades permitted to begin full in-person instruction, but not Grades 7-12?

Students in 5th and 6th grade at CCMS **travel throughout the day in cohorts** (refer to CDC guidance above), and therefore they meet the CDC criteria to attend school in-person five days a week while the county is in high transmission risk status. Once students begin 7th grade, they switch classes every period as singletons and are no longer identified as a cohort.

When can 7th - 12th pivot to five days of in-person instruction?

Once Orange County drops from "High" to "Substantial" risk of transmission. Transmission results are released weekly and include the 7-day running average. We will be able to better inform our Grade 7-12 families early next week based on this information.

So, what's the overall plan as of right now?

Based on the information above and the current rates, **the tentative plan right now** is that beginning April 26th, 5th and 6th graders will be able to begin five days of in-person instruction. That would make the CCSD K-6 full in-person. ***Please note that this is dependent on a few logistics being finalized, particularly with regards to lunch.*** Grades 7-12 would remain in their current Second Semester Hybrid Model of two days of in-person instruction and three days of remote instruction streaming period by period. We are in the process of reviewing the schedule for Mondays for Grades 7-12 as we plan for next steps.

As soon as the levels drop from "High" to "Substantial," Grades 7-12 would also join the five days of in-person instruction model. **The timeline for this pivot is contingent on the rates, as per the CDC, not the CCSD.**

When will we know the timeline/dates of when Grades 7-12 can go back fully for five days of in-person instruction?

All year we have pivoted between our hybrid and remote models due to quarantine rates within our District. This is no different in regards to moving back and forth between our current hybrid model and

five days of in-person instruction in Grades 7-12. **As soon as we have confirmation that we are in the "Substantial" level, we will pivot our Grade 7-12 students to full in-person instruction.** Adversely, if we are in "Substantial" and move to "High," we would then need to pivot from full in-person to our current hybrid model.

What about students who opted for full remote? Are they on track for April 26th?

Yes! If your family completed the registration, noting a requested pivot to full remote instruction while streaming into classes, and you have been contacted by your child(s) school, you should plan for this to begin in Grades 5-12 on April 26th. Transmission rates have no impact on this planning.

What if I've changed my mind based on the information above, missed the deadline to register, and now I want my child(ren) to go fully remote for the remainder of the school year?

Please contact your child(s) building principal to discuss this planning option further.

Although this new guidance has helped support our reopening plan on one level, it has caused difficulty to open on our secondary level. We understand completely the frustration this brings, and we ask that everyone remain vigilant with mitigation practices so that our rates can decrease sooner rather than later. With that said, please know that our planning efforts to support this pivot internally are in place, so when the rates decrease, we are ready to welcome all of our CCSD students back. Monday's rates will bring us new information for our upcoming planning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terry J. Dade". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Terry J. Dade
Superintendent of Schools