



Wednesday, September 23, 2020

AUDIO PARENTLINK:

Good evening, Upper Darby School District Staff & Families,

This is Dr. Daniel McGarry, Superintendent of Schools, calling with an important update regarding our plans to begin a staggered approach to return students to in-person instruction. I want to thank our teachers, staff, students, families, and administration, for all of their support and engagement. I also want to thank the School Board of Directors for their commitment to working tirelessly throughout this process. Accompanying this voicemail is an email briefly outlining the recently Board approved Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan for a staggered return to in-person instruction and athletics. We have also included a link to the survey we sent last Wednesday asking for feedback on whether or not you plan to transition your child to the in-person flexible instructional option or if you would like for your child to remain in the virtual-only learning option. The survey does not take long to complete and closes this Friday. Thank you for your attention and have a good evening.

EMAIL:

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Good evening, Upper Darby School District Staff & Families:

This is Dr. Daniel McGarry, Superintendent of Schools, calling with an important update regarding our plans to begin a staggered approach to return students to in-person instruction. I want to thank our teachers, staff, students, families, and administration, for

all of their support and engagement. I also want to thank the Board of School Directors for their commitment to working tirelessly throughout this process. During a special Board meeting held last evening, the Board of School Directors approved a revised Phased School Reopening Health Plan for a staggered return to in-person instruction as well as athletics. In an effort to provide as much information as quickly as possible to allow our families ample time for planning and preparation, we wanted to provide a synopsis of the approved plans. We also wanted to share with you some of our next steps. This pandemic has without question presented countless obstacles and barriers with ever changing guidance. We recognize the social and emotional toll all of this has had on our students, staff, and community. We appreciate your passionate feedback and your sincerity in wanting to support students and our staff throughout the reopening of schools.

We hope the following synopsis of our Board approved recommendations will be helpful to you and your family. Our recommendations to the Board were as follows:

1. Based on the latest guidelines and medical recommendations from the Chester County Health Department, the District recommended a staggered return to in-person instruction with flexible cohorts as initially discussed during the June 25, 2020 public forum on reopening schools. We have made some changes regarding our cohorts at the middle school level. We have also made slight schedule changes to all of our plans in order to increase direct instruction. Please continue to be patient with us as we work with our teachers and staff on any other adjustments.
2. Parents wishing for their child/ren to remain in the virtual learning model may do so. Students who remain in the virtual learning model will still be assigned to a cohort just like all of our students. The cohort methodology will allow for a more flexible return to in-person instruction and virtual synchronous instruction. We will allow students to transition from virtual learning to in-person learning, but we are asking families to work with us until a break in a semester. We are also continuing to ask all students to obtain a District-issued Chromebook.
3. Modifications to the in-person flexible learning schedules will increase direct instruction (synchronous) while students are not attending school with their cohort for in-person instruction. We will still require some asynchronous instruction to allow for completion of assignments.

4. The District has created a plan to improve classroom technology so students can attend class via Google Meets while their cohort is at home. We are adding two cameras, a monitor, new wiring, and a classroom microphone to increase direct instruction (600 classrooms). It is our hope that installation of this new technology is not delayed.
5. The District is also providing 2000 hotspots to families in need of internet access. The hotspots will only provide access to families using a District-issued laptop, and the cost of monthly internet and each device will be provided by the District via CARES funding. Each hotspot has the ability to support ten (10) students, comes with CIPA filters, and will be owned by the District. The hotspots are meant for educational purposes only.
6. The Board also approved the following calendar adjustments:
 - a. Changing November 2nd to a professional development day for teachers.
 - b. Moving the February 12, 2021 professional development day to November 2, 2020.
 - c. Changing February 12, 2020 to a day of instruction for students
7. We recommended a return of staff to facilities on October 13, 2020.
8. We recommended the following return-to-school dates for students. These dates are tentative and subject to change based on COVID-19 data trends. We will continue to monitor the data and will communicate any changes as soon as possible.

Date	Who Returns
11/05/20	Grades K-5 (Flexible Cohort Model with In-person Instruction)
11/05/20	Students in the following programs in K-12: Autistic Support, Life Skills Support, and Multi-Disability Support (Full Day In-person Instruction)
11/09/20	Grades 6-12 (Flexible Cohort Model with In-person Instruction) * District is continuing to look at the High School Schedule for potential improvements. Any changes will be presented publicly for Board approval.

Please refer to the following link for more information on our Phased Reopening of Schools Health Plans for instruction and athletics:

<https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/udar/Board.nsf/Public>

As we've stated in earlier communications, the the District has been tasked with balancing the importance of students being in school and in front of teachers (with all of the social and supportive benefits that come with in-person instruction) with the safety and health of our students and our staff during this COVID-19 pandemic. After careful consideration, the Board voted to approve our recommendations and a plan to begin to return staff and students to our facilities in an **in-person flexible learning model**. We will be updating our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to address some of the questions and concerns presented as public comments during last night's Board meeting.

Please also remember to complete the Reopening of School survey sent to all families on September 16th in Principals' electronic Wednesday folders. In this survey, you will be deciding between the in-person flexible learning option or to remain in the virtual-only learning option your child has been participating in since August. For each option, students are assigned to a cohort. Requests for cohort changes cannot be considered until the end of the marking period. We are asking that you complete this survey **for each child**. The survey only takes about 2 minutes to complete and closes on Friday, September 25th.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7BHPVBG>

Again, we thank you for your input and continual engagement and we will be following up soon with more details about the reopening of schools. Have a good evening.

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