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*Michelle Dutrow, Superintendent*

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November 24, 2020

Good Afternoon West Branch Families:

As we move into the holiday season tomorrow afternoon, the District has several COVID-19 related matters to share with you. As always, the changes are coming fast and furious from our state officials as the virus continues to spread at a very fast and significant rate across the Commonwealth. As a result, the time has come for us to slightly alter our plans.

#### Extended/Expanded Remote Closure

Given the upcoming holiday when families may still choose to be together, we can anticipate an increase in our positive case count and quarantines due to exposures. In an effort to put as many days as possible between Thanksgiving Day and the return to school, we will be extending Remote Instruction through next week and adding the Elementary to that plan. **All students will be on Remote Instruction on Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> through Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup>.** We hope to return on Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Further directions will be pushed out by the Elementary teachers via the Parent Communication App with the schedule for those days and details about synchronous (live) and asynchronous (on their own) lesson times.

Elementary families who responded to the recent survey and indicated they cannot get internet access at their home have been assigned a hotspot which will work with our school-issued devices only. These hotspots are being sent home with your child today in his/her backpack. Any other family with an access issue will need to call the Superintendent Office to discuss the matter. The District only has a finite number of hotspots as per our qualification and will be distributing them based on need.

#### Pennsylvania Travel Order

Last week, Pennsylvania's travel "Advisory" was shifted to a travel "Order" which went into effect on Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>. With the redesignation to an "Order", the school district is required to enforce all provisions. **If you travel out of state, you must either 1) receive a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of returning to PA, or 2) quarantine for 14 days upon your return to PA.** You will need to contact the school next week to make us aware of any travel so that we can confirm your child's return to school following the extended period of Remote Instruction. A note from the physician will no longer be sufficient.

#### Quarantines Parameters

There are several reasons a student or employee may need to quarantine due to COVID-19 and we understand it can be confusing. Following is a summary of quarantines:

1. Tested Positive – if a student or employee tests positive for COVID-19, he/she must quarantine from the date of their symptoms or the date of their test if asymptomatic.
2. Positive Family Member – if someone a student or employee lives with tests positive for COVID-19, the student or employee must quarantine for 24 days. The 24 days is based on the onset of symptoms or the test date if asymptomatic.
3. Immediate Family Member Tested – if someone a student or employee lives with is tested for COVID-19, the student or employee needs to quarantine until the test results are returned.
4. Close Contact Exposure – if a student or staff member is found to be in close contact with a person who tests positive, the student or employee must quarantine for 14 days.

5. Exposed to an Exposure – if a student or employee is exposed to a person who was exposed to a positive case, the student or employee does not need to quarantine.

### Winter Athletics Season

At this time, the Inter-County Conference (ICC) League has pushed the start of the winter season back due to the current surge in COVID cases. All 14 member districts supported this schedule adjustment. Practice may begin on December 14<sup>th</sup> with competitions slated to begin on January 4<sup>th</sup>. This schedule is subject to change based on several factors, including 1) cancellation at the state level, 2) additional ICC schedule change, or 3) school district closure status.

Additionally, the newly revised Masking Order, as it stands today, will require winter athletes participating in basketball and wrestling to be masked during all practices and competitions. The exception to this new requirement will be for those students who have a prior medical diagnosis and provide a physician's order documenting the diagnosis.

Additional health and safety measures, like those required during the fall season, will be implemented as well once the season begins.

### Holiday COVID Reporting

Even though our buildings will be closed for 11 days, it is imperative that we be informed of new cases. This includes students and employees who test positive as well as students and employees who need to quarantine due to an exposure to a positive case. The District will use this data to determine our ability to reopen for in-person instruction and to report accurate data to the Department of Health (DoH).

If you need to make the District aware of a COVID-19 related matter, you can reach us at one of the following email addresses:

Allison Koleno	Elementary Principal	<a href="mailto:akoleno@westbranch.org">akoleno@westbranch.org</a>
Mark Mitchell	Middle School Principal	<a href="mailto:mmitchell@westbranch.org">mmitchell@westbranch.org</a>
Joseph Holenchik	High School Principal	<a href="mailto:jholenchik@westbranch.org">jholenchik@westbranch.org</a>
Micki Dutrow	Superintendent	<a href="mailto:mdutrow@westbranch.org">mdutrow@westbranch.org</a>

### Remote Instruction Etiquette

A virtual lesson is a lot like being in class. We want students to be ready, focused, and have a clear understanding of the classroom rules, structures, routines, and expectations, just like they would if they were in their classroom.

- Please do not allow students to walk around the house while in a virtual class
- Students should be dressed for school, and not in their pajamas
- Students are not permitted to watch tv or play video games during a virtual class
- Keep backgrounds appropriate
- Help students to know when to mute as per the teacher's direction
- Students must be present in class with video so teachers can see their students and monitor participation
- Live lessons are class time, so help reinforce respect for all during that time

### Closing Comments

We wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving. While we know that many of you are making the tough decision to stay home this year, we applaud your decision and hope that you can still find time to call, text or chat with your loved ones! Please remember that our decision this year will impact our future holidays and while it seems unfair, it is a sacrifice for those we hold dearest.

Micki Dutrow