



Michelle Dutrow
Superintendent
516 Allport Cutoff
Morrisdale PA, 16858
Phone - 814.345.5615 x 4000
Fax - 814.345.5220
www.westbranch.org

Michelle Dutrow, Superintendent

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Good Morning:

Tomorrow, Thursday, August 26th is the 1st Student Day of the 2021-2022 school year. We look forward to welcoming your children back into the school tomorrow morning. This communication serves to provide a few updates related to COVID.

Masking: With the start of school tomorrow, student masking will be optional in the school and required on the bus/van. The full administrative team will be masked during school hours. All other employees have been requested to mask during the school day as well to provide a layer of mitigation that protects both the students and our employees. All visitors to the building must be masked upon entry.

The district will continue to monitor our county, local and school COVID data and adjust our plan as needed. Any unvaccinated student/employee who tests positive or is identified as a close contact will be required to quarantine as per CDC and DoH guidelines. Any vaccinated student/employee who tests positive or is identified as a close contact will be required to mask at school for 10 days or remain at home.

Although we are starting the school year with students unmasked, we do still strongly encourage parents to consider masking your child/children while they are at school. There are many children and adults in the building on any given school day and this does present an increased risk for exposure and illness. Please know that there will be adults masked here as well and we hope this will ease your concerns about your child/children being the only one's masking.

Food Service: We would like to remind our families that there will be no charge for student meals, both breakfast and lunch, for the 2021-2022 school year. The federal government has extended this measure to aid families with financial issues stemming from COVID. Lunch will be provided to remote students and information about signing up and pick-up will be provided to those families next week. If the entire school must close and go remote, we will be offering meals via our drive-thru.

Meet the Teacher/Open House: We are handling this annual visit as a virtual event this year to limit visitors into the building. PreK, Kindergarten and Grade 5 have all completed their activities as part of our student transition plan. All other grades will see our professional staff pushing out videos/slide shows to our students/parents. These virtual visits can be accessed as follows:

Grade 1 – Grade 4

Teachers will be sending their virtual presentations to the parents of their assigned students via the parent communication app (Class Dojo or Remind). These presentations will be available Thursday evening after you receive your parent app code and set up your account.

Grade 6 – Grade 12

Teachers will be emailing their virtual presentation to all assigned students via the student email system. These presentations can be accessed as of 4:00 PM today.

Closing Thoughts: While we are collectively excited to open another school year here at West Branch, we are also anxious about what this school year and COVID will bring. We will continue to work hard to balance the responsibility of the school district with the wishes of our families. With a layered approach to mitigation, we hope that our interruptions will be minimal and our time in school consistent and productive.

Thank you.

Micki Dutrow