



**Michelle Dutrow**  
Superintendent  
516 Allport Cutoff  
Morrisdale PA, 16858  
Phone - 814.345.5615 x 4000  
Fax - 814.345.5220  
[www.westbranch.org](http://www.westbranch.org)

*Michelle Dutrow, Superintendent*

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January 13, 2022

Good Morning:

I hope this communication finds you hanging in there. Unfortunately, we have run into our first roadblock here at West Branch which will require a shift.

### Remote Instruction Day

Please be advised that West Branch will be shifting to its Full Remote model of instruction for tomorrow – Friday, January 14, 2022. This shift is due to a lack of staffing across all three levels of the district (Elementary, Middle School, High School). As of today, we have 25% of our professional staff (teachers) absent from school. This number has steadily increased over the course of this week and will remain as such for tomorrow. These absences are a result of several factors, including COVID-19, influenza, individual and family quarantines, and other medical issues. We have diligently worked to cover all the shortages using administration, substitutes, combined study halls, and college education majors, but we are currently stretched too thin. This has presented us with a situation that is both untenable and unsafe.

### Remote Instruction Overview

As a reminder, in the remote model, students will be responsible for a school day at home. Teachers will be providing a combination of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (recorded/uploaded) instruction. Students will need to log into their online classroom at scheduled times. Accommodations will be made for students without internet access at home or for students not able to log in for live instruction due to childcare arrangements. Teachers will communicate with you (Elementary) or your child/children (Middle School/High School) to share expectations. You should in turn notify your child's teacher if you need accommodations for one of the mentioned reasons. If your child is ill and cannot participate in at-home school, an excuse will be required.

### 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

### Teacher Inservice Reminder

Monday, January 17, 2022 is a scheduled Inservice day. There is no school that day.

## Athletics / Extracurriculars

All practices and sporting events will be held as scheduled. This shift to remote instruction is due to staffing and as such the cancellation of practices and events is not warranted at this time.

## Current COVID Status

We are currently sitting with an in-house positivity rate of 3% based on confirmed positive cases for students and employees. While this does meet the threshold for a longer period of school closure, we are ticking up quickly with new cases. Our data is changing hourly and as such is not reasonable for me to send alerts with each daily change. What you need to know is that we have confirmed COVID cases/quarantines in all three buildings across all grade levels within a 14-day rolling data collection period. Additionally, it is reasonable to suspect that we have asymptomatic cases throughout our building. Once again, I feel I should gently remind families that you should be making a plan for your child/children should we need to transition to the Full Remote model for a longer period.

## Closing

I think it is fair to say that we are all collectively tired, frustrated and drained with this endless cycling of COVID-19. While it is easy to just want to give up as we near the end of two years, we continue to need your support and assistance as we work through this latest surge. Please continue to report positive cases or close contacts to us, keep your child home if they exhibit symptoms, considering having your child/children mask-up again here at school, and assist your child during any days of remote instruction. I know this is a big "ask" but the only way we get to the other side of this surge is to stick together and make informed decisions.

Thanks,  
Micki Dutrow