



*Delivering Extraordinary Value to Families*

## **Steel Valley School District**

### **District Administrative Offices**

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*Edward Wehrer*  
*Superintendent*

January 25, 2021

Dear Steel Valley Staff and Families,

We are beginning the transition toward opening school for those students whose families want them to learn in-person in the classroom. On Monday, February 1, 2021, each school will move forward with a hybrid plan that was developed by our teachers and building principals. Each building will provide options for families that prefer to remain remote-only, too. The building principals have detailed the specifics for their building; that information will be mailed home and also is available on our website and Facebook pages. For the remainder of this school year, we will not require school uniforms, though we still have a dress code that can be found on our website.

Finding the right balance between effective learning and safety is a challenge. For some people, the current model is working well, while for others it is not. The changes that we are making may be disruptive, but they are a significant step toward the resumption of in-person learning, which we acknowledge as the best environment in which children learn. Increasing in-person learning (for those who prefer it) is our goal, and we are planning to do that on February 15, though we have to make clear that the state of the pandemic could change those plans.

We have made changes to make our buildings safer. Those changes include air filtration units in the classrooms at Park School, which is our only building that does not have central HVAC, and plexiglass and seating for three students instead of four at our High School cafeteria tables. We will follow the procedures and policies in our Health and Safety Plan, which states that we will maximize physical distancing; we do not promise to maintain any set, minimum distance of separation.

When we come back to school, everyone still must be prepared to move back to fully remote instruction with very little notice. That can happen because of weather, an issue with the physical plant at the school, or because we reach a certain threshold of COVID-19 cases in a particular school. A summary of the state's guidelines for responses to positive cases in schools is on the reverse side of this letter.

Sincerely,

Edward Wehrer

On November 30, 2020, the Steel Valley School District attested to the Pennsylvania Department of Education that we would follow their recommendations on whether or not to close a school following the identification of COVID-19 cases among students and staff members that have been in school. The guidelines created by the state, which can be found in detail at <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/ReopeningPreKto12/PublicHealthGuidance/Pages/SchoolClosureRecommendations.aspx>, are dependent on the size of the school, the number of cases of COVID-19 within a 14-day period, and the level of community transmission in the county.

Barrett and Park have fewer than 500 students, so our elementary schools are considered small schools by the state. Because the High School and Middle School share a common roof and have fewer than 900 students between them, those two schools are considered one combined medium-sized school.

Like most of the counties in the state, Allegheny County's level of transmission remains substantial, though most of the pandemic metrics, such as incidence rate and positivity rate, in Allegheny County are trending in a better direction now than they were the past couple months.

#### **PA Department of Health Guidelines for Cleaning Schools Following COVID Cases**

These are the guidelines for the first level of cases within a 14-day period in a school (1 case at Barrett or Park, 3 cases or fewer for the HS + MS):

- School does not need to close.
- Clean areas where cases spent time.
- Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine.

These are the guidelines for the second level of cases within a 14-day period in a school (2 – 4 cases at Barrett or Park, 4 – 6 cases for the HS + MS):

- Close school for 3 – 7 days. If case investigations, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfecting can be accomplished in a faster time frame, the length of closure time may be shortened.
- Clean areas where cases spent time.
- Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine.

These are the guidelines for the third level of cases within a 14-day period in a school (5+ cases at Barrett or Park, 7+ cases for the HS + MS):

- Close school for 14 days. If case investigations, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfecting can be accomplished in a faster time frame, the length of closure time may be shortened.
- Clean areas where cases spent time.
- Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine.