



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

January 7, 2021

Good Evening West Branch Families:

As we move beyond the Christmas and New Year holidays, it is time for us to take stock of our current COVID-19 situation, consider new state guidance, and confirm our instructional plans for the immediate future. This continues to be a difficult time for our state and local community as case counts are on the rise. Our hope is to see a settling off now that we are moving further away from the holidays.

Today, the Department of Education and the Department of Health released new guidance that includes a recommendation that school districts consider providing in-person instruction for students Preschool – Middle School. This recommendation is based on recent meta-analysis that indicates children younger than 10-14 years of age have a lower susceptibility to COVID-19. This recommendation is further based on the premise that a school district can effectively adhere to all health and safety measures recommended by the CDC and the DoH. It should be noted that this educational arrangement would need to be adjusted to remote instruction based on case counts within schools. The good news for West Branch is that this model is how we have been operating during the 2020-21 school year thus far. As such, we do plan to return all PreK – 8th grade students to the building for in-person instruction effective Monday, January 11th and continue cyber instruction for those enrolled in that model.

We are currently still considering how best to proceed with the High School, based on current student case information, and hope to finalize our decision by tomorrow if possible. We understand that in-person instruction within the school setting provides the best well-rounded option for all students. However, we are also aware that older students are more susceptible to being exposed to or contracting the virus based on a higher degree of social interaction beyond the instructional day.

To finalize our plans for next week, we do need your assistance. If your child/children are currently in quarantine due to an exposure or positive test result, we need you to contact the school district tomorrow so we can 1) determine the return date for PreK – Grade 8 students as per DoH requirements, and 2) finalize a decision as it relates to the instructional model for our High School students. If you need to provide the district with COVID-19 student data, please contact David Williamson, Coordinator of Pupil Services, at (814) 345-5616, ext. 1006 or at dwilliamson@westbranch.org.

Micki Dutrow