



We Build Futures

Neshaminy School District

Administrative Offices • 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road • Langhorne, PA 19047

Good Morning Neshaminy,

I hope this email finds you well and enjoying the “Summer Mode.” Normally, summer is the time for education and school to take a back seat to other activities and priorities. Unfortunately, 2020 has been anything but normal. As a result, I feel the need to begin open, transparent communication with you regarding the plans (or lack thereof...) for the re-opening of Neshaminy Schools in September. This email is the first of many on the topic this summer.

It is clear, we need to get students back to school in September. In doing so, minimizing the risk to students, staff and the community of the spread of the Coronavirus is at the forefront. Over the past several months, Superintendents of Bucks County schools have met twice a week with the directors of Bucks County’s Health Department and Office of Emergency Management to develop plans for the re-opening of schools in September. Additionally, the Neshaminy Cabinet has met daily over the past 4 months planning for the same. Such planning will continue throughout the summer involving school-level staff from all classifications and areas of expertise.

As you can imagine, no sooner do we flesh out an idea, do the circumstances change causing the idea to be insufficient or no longer the predominant path forward. As a result of the fluidity and ambiguity of the circumstances that may exist in September, we are concurrently planning several options in preparation for the re-opening of schools. We have centered our thinking on an easy transition between plans on short notice along with giving families some choices to best fit their family’s unique circumstances.

We began planning with an incorrect assumption of the process being “Here are the rules; what can schools look like in September given this set of rules?” Instead, we find ourselves under a process that looks more like, “What does school need to look like in September and as best you can, follow various differing recommendations.”

As you are probably aware there is not a single source for guidance to school districts for re-opening: the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, the PA Department of Health, the PA Department of Education, the Bucks County Health Department and any number of other Think Tanks/Expert Organizations. And some of the guidance is significantly different. But what is the same from all guidance are the phrases: “recommended,” “suggested,” “when necessary,” “if feasible,” and the like. There are a few “must do” and “required” type statements when it comes to schools. Additionally, PDE explicitly states that such decisions are a local matter and left to the individual School Boards to approve. I have attached a guidance document from the Director of the Bucks County Health Department to School Districts.

At the end of July, and with the input and guidance of many, many others, I will recommend a re-opening of school plan for School Board approval. That plan will contain a set of back-up options which the Board can opt for in late August as circumstances warrant at that time. In the following pages, I will provide an overview of two major components of the re-opening plan – academic model and transportation model - as each stand to date.

Fall 2020 Academic Planning/Options:

Plan A: Full Traditional In-School Education with added safety/cleaning elements.

Rationale: This plan prioritizes getting students back to school for the full in-school academic experience. Social distancing is reduced simply because of the sheer numbers of students.

- All students in school every day.
- Classrooms are arranged to provide maximum distance between desks.
- In most classrooms, this is approximately 3 feet between desks/seats.
- When furniture and space permits, desks/seats will face the same direction.
- Cafeteria Areas will be expanded to include additional locations in the school to maximize distance between seats.
- Staggered class transitions at Elementary and Middle Levels.
- One-way traffic at the High School level.
- No Lockers/Locker Areas used
- Classroom Sets of Textbooks provided

Plan B: Blue/Red Every-Other-Day Schedule

Rationale: This plan maximizes Social Distance by reducing the number of students in classrooms, hallways and on buses. But, also reduced to half is the in-school academic experience.

- Students rotate, one day in school, then one day with asynchronous work online at home.
- Classrooms are arranged to provide maximum distance between desks.
- In most classrooms, this is approximately 6 feet between desks/seats.
- When furniture and space permits, desks/seats will face the same directions.
- Certain student populations with specific educational needs would attend every day.
- Cafeteria Areas will be expanded to include additional locations in the school to maximize distance between seats.
- Staggered Class transitions at Elementary and Middle Levels.
- One-way traffic at the High School level.
- No Lockers/Locker Areas used
- Classroom sets of Textbooks provided

Plan C: Full Online Instruction for all students for a duration of X similar to Spring 2020.

Rationale: This plan exists in the event schools are forced to close in September or at any other time during the school year.

- The experience would be similar to the Spring of 2020.
- The teachers would manage an asynchronous, 30-minute a day, lesson in Canvas.
- Depending on the duration of the school closure, the Canvas experience will include some enhancement to the Spring Model.

Plan D: Neshaminy Full Online Programming Option - Independent of Plans A – C

Rationale: For families not comfortable sending their child/children to school under the above plans, offer a separate remote learning option.

- Core areas Asynchronous Online Courses of Reading/English, Math, Science and Social Studies.
- The online courses are independent and separate from the above plans.
- If desired, students will be able to leave this remote learning program and return to whichever plan Neshaminy is offering at the time.
- Electives and Special Courses will not be available.

Transportation:

A completely separate issue from the educational/academic plans above, is planning to get students to and from school. To better understand this dilemma, almost all of our buses have 26 seats. At the high school level, bus runs are scheduled for approximately 52 – 55 students. At the middle school level, bus runs are scheduled for roughly 64 students. Elementary runs have 78 students.

Transportation has worked on a number of scenarios. Bottom line: Any scenarios with less than 52 students on a bus – 2 students per seat – fails from the logistical view. There simply is not enough equipment, drivers and time in the day.

Even at 52 students on a bus, adding some buses and hoping to find drivers, we would be forced to do multiple runs at each level or stagger middle and elementary school start and ending times thereby shortening the instructional day at all levels.

So what's the answer? There isn't one yet. With 500 school districts in Pennsylvania alone, adding buses and drivers won't be feasible for Neshaminy, others in the Commonwealth or the Nation.

The below are the two scenarios we, and others in the county, are exploring in more detail:

Option 1: Full Bus Loads at all levels as noted above. Require students to wear masks. Ask parents who are able to drive students to school to work together in lieu of the using the bus to reduce the numbers. (Add a morning and afternoon traffic jam to the list of issues to resolve.)

Option 2: Two students per Seat Bus Loads. Require students to wear masks. Stagger school start and end time at Middle and Elementary levels. Shorten the school day at all levels. This option will push our equipment and driver utilization to the point of ending day field trips and afterschool sports transportation.

We know any change in the existing schedule will impact many families' AM or PM childcare plans/routines. We need another week or so to nail down the feasibility and costs of busing option 2 above prior to putting forth any recommendation. Thank you for your patience.

I think that is enough to give you a foundation and context of the circumstances and planning for the first email. Once we can add additional details and depth to the above plans, we will begin to survey parents as to preference and choices on both the academic and transportation plans. Over the next several weeks, I will continue communicating details of the above plans along with other issues such as:

- What are the plans for Masks?
- What are the plans for Symptom Monitoring?
- What will classrooms look like?
- What will hallways look like?
- What will the Lunchroom look like?
- What cleaning and sanitizing plans are in place?
- What about Recess?
- What will happen when (not “if”) there is a Positive COVID-19 case in a school?
- What about co-curricular activities?

Clearly, the safest plan as far as the spread of the Coronavirus is for schools to remain closed in September. Just as the safest plan to not be in a car accident is to not get in a car. The essential questions we struggle to answer is how do we “normalize” society with the virus and where does education fall in such a normalization. When I first drafted this email, Plan A – all students in, every day – was leading the four-county thinking.... 10 days later, I am no longer sure that is the case. Additionally, we are waiting for clarification on the Commonwealth’s new Universal Mask Order of July 3. While we don’t have all the answers yet, we do promise to communicate frequently, provide transparency, be accessible for questions/concerns and give families as many options as possible as together we find the answers.

On behalf of the Neshaminy Cabinet, Mr. Meehan, Ms. Burkholder, Mr. Devlin, Mrs. Kozik and Mr. Irwin,

And with Neshaminy Pride,

Rob

215-809-6512 – rings my cell

Rob McGee, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Neshaminy School District

rmcgee@neshaminy.org