



November 19, 2020

Dear Hampton Families,

As I had indicated to you in a recent communication, I am reaching out to you this evening about an important decision we have reached regarding the next steps in our Phased Reopening plan. Earlier today, I was fortunate to have been able to participate in a very lengthy meeting with officials from the Allegheny County Health Department. As I am sure you are aware, Dr. Bogen and her team continue to express serious concerns about the unprecedented spread of the COVID virus in Allegheny County.

Overall, we learned that the positivity and incidence rate is reaching unforeseen levels in Allegheny County. However, we were told that schools remain extremely safe and that there is no indication that virus spread in our region is connected to our schools in any notable manner. It was confirmed that the explosion of cases that we are seeing has been due to spread entirely unrelated to our careful practices of in-person instruction. I am extremely proud of the ability of our teachers and staff to safely deliver quality academic instruction under these extremely challenging circumstances. Our partnership with our families and students in employing careful and consistent mitigation strategies has been effective. Our students have benefited tremendously from the learning opportunities that our dedicated teachers have been able to provide.

Nevertheless, in spite of the safe conditions in our schools we have learned that the Thanksgiving Break is a substantial concern for the Health Department from a community spread standpoint. Also, we now have very strict travel restrictions that will result in many families and students needing to participate in a travel quarantine post-thanksgiving. Finally, it is difficult to determine the impact college students returning to our area will have on all of us related to the spread of the virus. These variables present a significant concern as we carefully think ahead about what important steps we might take to reduce risk for our students, staff and families.

While we recognize the irreplaceable value of the in-person instruction we have been able to provide to date, we believe this is an appropriate time to consider what steps we can take to protect everyone. Due to the above unforeseen risk factors surrounding the Thanksgiving Break we believe it would be prudent to employ an alteration to in-person instruction that would support the need for students and family members in our school community to remain safely at home following the Thanksgiving Break. To accomplish this, we will initiate Remote Learning for all students in the school district beginning on December 1 with a return to in-person instruction on December 10. During the time that precedes the return to school for our students we will be in very close contact with the Allegheny County Health Department so that we can make a smooth and safe return to in-person instruction.

Please know that during Remote Learning our teachers will be providing robust synchronous instruction using engaging techniques such as zoom and other electronic tools that have been successfully employed during the last several months. This experience will be significantly different from the teaching and learning that was employed last spring. Additionally, we will be communicating with you in detail over the next several days so that our students are prepared for the Remote Learning that will begin on December 1.

Thank you for your patience as we have worked carefully to consider this important alteration in our Phased Reopening plan. We are confident that this action will significantly contribute to the safety of our entire community in the midst of this evolving pandemic in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael R. Loughead". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Dr. Michael R. Loughead
Superintendent of Schools