



NORTH EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT

50 EAST DIVISION STREET • NORTH EAST, PENNSYLVANIA 16428
TELEPHONE (814) 725-8671 • FAX (814) 725-9380

www.nesd1.org

Dr. Michele Spurgeon Hartzell, Superintendent

Mr. Jeffrey Fox, Business Manager

Mrs. Shelley Allen, Administrative Assistant

July 22, 2020

Dear North East Families:

We hope you are doing well and we want to thank you for all of your support during these challenging times. You may have seen a variety of scenarios and different guidelines for how schools should operate this fall as discussed in the media. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is leaving these options up to the school districts. We wanted you to know that the safety of our students and staff is our number one priority. The Pandemic Task Force has been meeting to provide guidance and recommendations to the safe opening of schools and these safety plans are posted on the district website at nesd1.org.

Our administrative team has been working hard to ensure that we are providing the best possible options for our families. The enclosed flyer provides a brief overview of the health and safety protocols as well as the academic learning options we will be providing to our families to meet the needs of our students. Please review the North East school reopening safety plan which can be found on our district website and was approved by the Board of Directors on June 25th. **Keep in mind that information is changing daily and the district may make additional recommendations based on guidance from the local and state Departments of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the CDC.**

We have posted the discussion questions regarding the school reopening from the July 21st virtual Town Hall meeting on the website at nesd1.org. We have also posted two parent videos on the website. First, a parent video created by our local IU and Emily Shears, an epidemiologist from UPMC; and, a video that includes a demonstration of what a live stream classroom will look like.

Currently, the reopening options include: in-person learning as well as three alternative options including: live-streaming, cyber, and home schooling.

The primary option (first) is the in-person learning model which is designed to provide a traditional educational experience and brings our students back to school. The health and safety plan, posted on the district website, outlines the measures the district has taken to provide a safe learning environment for our students. One of the questions we receive most is regarding masks. At this time, the Pennsylvania Department of Health has mandated the wearing of masks. We have provided a FAQ from the PDE regarding the mask mandate on the district website. Although we cannot control this mandate, we will provide opportunities throughout the day where students in grades 3 through 12 would be able to safely remove their masks. We will also be allowing teachers to use outdoor spaces for learning in which students will have access to Wi-Fi for utilization of Chromebooks. Students in K-2 will be spaced six feet apart; therefore, when they are in their seats, they will be able to remove their masks.



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The alternative learning options include:

The second option is North East Live-Stream. This option allows students to login from their Chromebook at home and follow their daily schedule live. These sessions will not be taped; students must follow the schedule and required seat time for daily attendance. This option requires internet access from home.

The third option is North East Academy. This is North East School District's new cyber program. Before discussing this option, I wanted to break a myth. Cyber programs are not free. These programs utilize school district tax payer dollars to fund the programs. For example, last year the district spent approximately \$540,000 (five hundred and forty-thousand) dollars out of the budget to pay for cyber program tuition costs.

Cyber programs are completely online, self-directed, and self-paced. This option requires internet access. Why choose the North East Academy over other cyber options? Our new program will offer a variety of courses tailored to meet the individual needs of our students. Our students will receive a Chromebook to use and will receive a North East School District diploma upon graduation whereas, the "other" programs do not offer a North East School District diploma. If you are considering cyber school as an option, we encourage you to use our program.

The fourth option is home schooling. The district does not operate home schooling programs; these are run by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Parents are required to submit a program of study, keep daily attendance, and have their child's portfolio evaluated by a certified home school evaluator. Information can be found under Board Policy 137.

We have posted a survey for you to complete which is available online at nesd1.org. The survey must be completed by August 1st. The survey includes your selection of learning and transportation options for your child(ren). It will be very important that you complete one survey per household by the deadline. We will send out an All Call reminder regarding the survey. If you will need assistance with completing the survey or need to use a computer, please give us a call at 725-8671 ext. 3904 or 3906.

We strongly encourage our parents to reach out to the building administration with any questions you may have regarding our back to school options. We once again thank you and appreciate all you have done to support our schools during these unique times and want you to know that we will continue to do the best we can to provide you with appropriate, flexible, safe, and equitable options. We cannot wait to see our children back in our schools in August!

Respectfully yours,

Dr. Michele S. Hartzell, Superintendent

Attachment: Options Flyer
Printed NENJ – 7/24/2020