



## July 21, 2020 - Town Hall Discussion Response to Questions

**Could we eliminate “extras” such as choir, art, gym, to shorten the school day?** All content areas are essential for a well-rounded education for all students. We are required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to teach 180 days and 990 hours in secondary and 900 hours in primary grade levels as well as required to meet the Pennsylvania requirements for academic standards.

**Many of us live in rural North East and have slow and unreliable internet.** We understand and are aware of this concern in our area. Depending on the option a parent selects, the district will work with the families to address concerns prior to the start of the school year.

**Is the goal for k-2 to stay at desks to avoid masks or is interacting going to be encouraged more with masks? Originally it was so they could take their masks off at their desks.** With the new PA Department of Health guidelines, they recommended keeping on even if seated; however, when students can social distance or are seated six feet apart, they may remove their mask. They are also permitted to wear the face shields instead of a mask.

**Are shields allowed to be worn without mask?** Face shields were approved as a face covering by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and can be worn without a mask.

**What is the district's policy if a student refuses to wear a mask?** As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, masks are a Pennsylvania Department of Health requirement. We will ensure that students receive breaks in which they can take off masks, we will maximize outdoor time, students can also wear a face shield (which will be provided). In lab classes at the high school, we will have desk shields as well.

**Have you considered a hybrid return for middle and high school or every other day?** Our safety plans were developed to support the return of school in both the green and yellow phases. However, we will continue to follow the guidance of the Department of Health and Department of Education and adjust our options as needed until the first day of school.

**Tell us more about the North East Cyber school - How is it better than well know cyber schools who already specialize, and excel at distance, online teaching?** Our philosophy supports the American Academy of Pediatrics that children need to be in school; however, if parents do select a cyber school option, the Capital Area Online Learning Association (CAOLA) program has a reputation of success and has served online students in Pennsylvania for over a decade. In addition, this is the only cyber option in which our students will be able to also earn a North East Diploma.

**Will students enrolled in NE Academy or the Live-Streaming option be taking the PSSA/Keystone exams?** Students who enroll in the Live-Stream or cyber program will take PSSA and Keystone exams. Students will have to come to campus to take the exams. The test administrator will make all necessary arrangements.

**If students/parents choose an online platform, will the district provide internet service?** The district does not provide internet service; however, if families selected they had no internet service on the parent survey, we will work with families to provide a hot spot.

**For the Live-Stream option do the students do school work/stay logged in for the entire school day?** Students will log into Google Classroom and follow their normal assigned schedule. When students are working independently, the student may log off to do their work if they do not have questions for the teacher. They will log off during their lunch time, recess, mask breaks, and PE if there is not a health lesson being taught that day.



**Is there going to be an opportunity for us parents to preview the Live-Streaming option or the North East academy option before we have to make our decision?** Yes. A sample video has been uploaded to the website. Parents may also contact Mr. Beardsley or Dr. Karns at the middle school for a demonstration.

**If we choose the Live-Stream option will there be a meeting with the teacher before the first day to go over the requirements, homework, quick run through of how the system works?** The district will provide additional information before the start of school.

**What type of homework will be expected with the Live-Streaming option?** The same classwork that is expected from all students enrolled in the class will be expected for students enrolled in the Live-Stream option.

**For the North East academy option does a North East teacher check the work the students submit?** The North East Academy is an online cyber school option. The cyber teachers check the student work.

**For the North East academy option how do we choose what classes would be best for our child/children?** The guidance counselors and building administrators will help schedule students that select this option.

**If we choose the North East Academy school option for our kids, will there be teachers available to ask specific questions to or will it be video lessons only with no teacher interaction with students?** Students will direct their questions to the teacher teaching the cyber course through the program. They will also be assigned a mentor from the cyber program to monitor attendance and completion of assignments. Lessons are both independent and interactive.

**How would my student get extra help with either the “Live” or “NE Academy?”** The North East Academy is an independent cyber program. The cyber teachers and/or mentor will be the individual’s students go to for help. For live-stream the student would be in the classroom. They can ask their questions as if they were sitting in the classroom. If they need additional help, they would e-mail their teacher.

**Are any North East teachers doing double duty, teaching for the Cyber School as well as in the live classroom setting?** North East teachers do not teach the cyber courses.

**The cost of Cyber School to the district was mentioned, but no mention as to whether it will cost the parents anything extra. Are there fees?** Parents do not pay for tuition fees for the cyber option.

**Has anything changed with Erie County Technical School?** As of today, there are no changes to the Erie County Technical School program or calendar.

**For In Person Learning, at the high school level, what will a typical day look like for a high school student?** For both in person and Live-Stream, students at the high school will follow an intensive block schedule. Students will take four classes in semester one and four classes in semester two. ECTS students will take two classes in semester one and two in semester two and attend the ECTS program as scheduled. Students attending in person will rotate to their classes throughout the school day. Students will each lunch in the cafeteria, outside, or in classrooms.

**Will students switch between classes?** Students in the high school will switch between classes. In grades 6-8 the teachers will rotate, in grades K-5 students will be assigned a grade level teacher.

**Will there be access to the cafeteria?** Students in the middle and high school will rotate on days to eat in the cafeteria. They may also eat outside weather permitting or in their assigned classroom. Students in the elementary building will eat in their classroom, in the cafeteria, or may go outside weather permitting.



**For In-Person Learning at the Middle School Level, what does a typical day look like with for these students?** Students are assigned a classroom and the teachers will rotate into the classrooms for limited transitions. Students will take frequent breaks, may go outside for a class, eat lunch in the cafeteria, outside or in classrooms, and will go outside for recess and physical education classes.

**Is tech offered at the middle school?** – Yes. Each student will be provided supplies and the special teachers will rotate to the classes

**PE Class** – Our students will go outside as much as possible as well as be provided instruction in health and wellness

**Music** – The teacher will rotate in the classroom to provide instruction

**Is gym time and recess still going to be in every grade's schedule? What are they allowed to do if playground is closed?** We will have large areas where students can safely run, play, walk around the track, jump rope, etc.

**What will happen to the music program next year?** We are still offering music programs. The music teacher in the elementary school will rotate in the classrooms. In the middle and high school, the teachers will rotate in the classrooms and focus more on the history of music and music theory as well as using technology for music such as iPads. We have very creative and innovative music teachers.

**What is being done to ensure the music program continues to be strong in the coming years?** We have very strong music program. Our teachers will ensure that we continue to offer an outstanding program to our students.

**What will happen with the art programs?** In grades K-8 the art teacher will rotate into the classrooms. The high school will continue to meet in the art room. Students who elect the Live-Stream option will be required to pick materials prior to the first day of school.

**For the North East Live-Stream, what is the audio-visual hardware provided and who pays for that?** Students will use their Chromebooks and will use the Google Classroom platform to login to their daily class schedule. The Chromebooks are provided by the school district.

**How are tests done in this environment?** Students will complete their tests through Google Classroom the same time as their peers.

**Will seniors still be able to be senior aides?** Yes. There will be modifications to this program.

**What will happen with service learning?** Service learning will still be available. There will be new guidelines to this program.

**Are books provided or is this all through Google Classroom?** If this is regarding live-streaming, if resources are needed, they will be provided to the students during Chromebook pick-up or prior to the school year beginning. We will make every effort to provide all resources students need through Google Classroom.

**In regards to the North East Academy, what forum will this be?** There is a separate platform for online cyber school called Genius.

**How is this program self-paced and how will students stay on track? How will students stay accountable for their grades in this program?** It is a self-paced cyber program that has timelines for completing assignments. Students are accountable to complete assignments on time just like any other cyber program. CAOLA has mentors that monitor student assignments and class attendance. Grades are provided to the district each quarter by cyber teachers and students will receive a North East SD report card.



**Will the Academy offer Honors programs?** There are A/P and Honors options available through the North East Academy CAOLA partners.

**How can we be assured that this cyber program will operate at the same level (or greater) as more established cyber programs in PA?** “The Capital Area Online Learning Association is the largest online learning consortium in Pennsylvania. Membership in CAOLA provides students with engaging, high quality curriculum. The courses are customized to fit their needs, while teaching valuable technology skills that are essential for success in the 21st century (CAOLA).”

**When will further guidance be provided on the NE Academy? How do we register?** Parents that select this option will be contacted by their respective building administration and/or guidance counselor for scheduling and to complete necessary paperwork. As soon as we receive our district logins we will be able to enroll students that select this option. We anticipate no later than August 10<sup>th</sup> to begin enrolling students.

**How will the live-stream be organized so that the students are getting a superior learning experience?** The students will log into their Google Classroom and participate live with their peers and classroom teachers. This option also provides for students to return to in person learning at any time.

**How many hours per day? Are different teachers teaching different subjects at different times?** If this question relates to cyber, the program is self-paced and there are program requirements. If this question is related to live-stream, students will follow their normal daily schedule as if they were in school.

**My son has an IEP, does that apply to the North East Academy?** Students with IEP’s are eligible for the cyber program. Please contact the North East School District’s Special Education Supervisor if you are considering this option.

**Will students enrolled in the NE Academy cyber still be able to meet the requirements for graduation, and the requirements of AP or honors track?** There are honors and A/P options in the cyber program. If this is the option a parent selects, parents and students will need to work with the guidance counselor or building administrator to ensure they are enrolled in courses they need to meet the graduation requirements.

**For those students taking band will they be able to take this class if they choose the live-stream option?** If a student is scheduled for band, they will be able to attend the live-stream class.

**What about other classes like human bio that may require some lab or dissections can students still participate in these classes live-stream or can they only choose classes that do not have these requirements?** Students may have to complete a virtual dissection. The district will provide as many resources to ensure students have what they need to be successful during their live-stream classes.

**In the North East Live-Stream how many students will be assigned to the teacher instructing the Live-Stream?** It depends on the content or grade level, but no more students will be assigned to any one teacher than they would normally have if the students were in their classroom.

**What will happen if/when a vaccine becomes available?** We will take guidance on vaccines from the CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health.

**Will only vaccinated children be permitted to attend in-school learning?** We cannot provide an answer at this time.

**How will parents be notified of their child's exposure to Covid-19 in the school setting?** We will follow the Department of Health guidelines for contact tracing. Students that have been exposed to a positive case that were within six feet of the positive student for more than 15 minutes will be contacted. Currently the Department of Health is conducting contact tracing, districts may be involved in the future. Only individuals in the district who have taken the Johns Hopkins contact tracing course and that have received a certificate will be able to assist the Department of Health for contact tracing. The district will notify parents of a



positive case through Sapphire student information management system; however, the district will not be able to release any personal or identifiable information for any student.

**Are plans in place in the case of an outbreak? What are these plans?** We will follow our safety plan on the district website and we will work closely with the local Department of Health to determine the need for any classroom or building closures.

**What is the protocol for a student who becomes ill or who needs to be quarantined? How would the school be sure they do not fall behind?** If a student that is attending in person is contacted by the Department of Health to quarantine for 14 days, they will need to stay home. They will be able to login to live-stream. If they are sick, they should take sick days and follow district absentee policies. If they become ill in school, they will be taken to a designated room and the nurse will evaluate the student. Parents should also monitor their children and, any student that has a fever should stay home in accordance with district policy. Student school work will be provided through the Google Classroom platform.

**We have 3 children a kindergartener, first grader and third grader will all three have the same schedule for Live-Streaming?** They will all follow their normal daily classroom schedule.

**My son goes to my mom's house before school with 2 other kids and gets on the bus with them. Would they be able to be in the same class since they are already going to be together before and after school and would limit the amount of kids they would be exposed to?** We will make effort to accommodate these situations. If they are in the same grade, I would recommend contacting the building administrator.

**How attentive will I have to be with the Live-Streaming?** If parents select this option for their children, students will have to login in person. Students will be expected to be present the entire day – just as if they were in the classroom. They will have to follow district dress code, policies, and procedures. If they do not attend, they will be marked absent just as if they did not attend schools. There will be times throughout the day when breaks will be given and independent work may be required. Students will also break for lunch. The district is accountable for documenting attendance and the instructional day.

**Will I have to sit with my son the entire time, who is 6, or will the teacher know if he is not paying attention?** Live-Streaming is interactive. The student will be able to ask questions and the teacher will be able to see the student live and may redirect, if needed. If the student gets up and leaves their designated learning space, the parent would have to redirect.

**How will busing work?** We will follow the protocols in the safety plan. The maximum is two per seat, students must wear a mask. They will load back to front and dismiss front to back. If the children are from the same household they may sit three per seat. The busses will be cleaned between each run. We will have to adjust the bus schedule and may have double bus runs depending on the number of students returning in person.

**If my child was told he would have a specific teacher this school year will that still be honored?** The building administration will do their best to honor placements; however, we may need to adjust due to leveling class sizes based on the number of students returning.

**How many children will be in a class?** If all students were to participate in person, currently, grades 3-8 do not have a class size greater than 21; K-2 currently has less than 16 students per classroom; and in the high school we are trying not to have any class sizes greater than 20. We will make additional adjustments to reduce class sizes once parents complete the survey and we evaluate the number of students returning in person. We have also removed, and are in the process of removing, all “non-essential” furniture from all classrooms in order to be able to maximize space.

**How often will kids be leaving their classroom?** Classroom transitions will be limited throughout the day in the primary building. Students will go outside for recess, to pick up lunches, for PE class in the middle and high schools, and anytime as deemed appropriate and needed by the building administration.



**How often will kids use outdoor classrooms and how often will they be cleaned?** Outdoor spaces will be used on a rotating basis at the discretion of the building administration. They will be sanitized throughout the day. Sanitizer is being provided to teachers to utilize as well.

**Once students choose an option will they need to stick with it for a certain period of time or can they switch at any time?** If a student enrolls in live-stream and wants to return to school, this will be permitted. If a student attends in person and wants to move to live-stream, this will be permitted one time; the exception being if the student is required to quarantine; they will be able to return to in-person. If a student enrolls in the cyber program and wants to return to school, the counselor and building administration will review each case on an individual basis. This is new to all of us and we will work with our families to provide the best learning environment for our students.

**Please address Closed Campus:** We are limiting visitors to our campus to essential deliveries and conduct business during school hours. Parents will be able to drop off students and pick them up for appointments. We are encouraging our families to help their child to be responsible for remembering items they will need for the day in order to cut down on unnecessary trips to the schools with forgotten items. We will also provide homework through Google Classroom.

**How will walkers be dismissed?** Arrival and dismissal procedures will be provided by building administration; however, we will be changing some protocols for the 20-21 school year.

*Responses to the additional questions submitted live during the Town Hall virtual meeting will be added next week and a revised document will be uploaded.*

*Thank you again for your participation and the great feedback. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact the building administrators or my office.*

*Respectfully,*

*Dr. Michele S. Hartzell, Superintendent*