



**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS**

**Office of the Superintendent**

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November 20, 2020

Dear Parent or Staff Member,

I am writing to provide you an update on the status of schools as we enter Thanksgiving week.

I spoke at length with our Departments of Health yesterday. As you may know, the NJDOH's [latest COVID figures](#) (summarized below) are sobering.

<b>Northwest Region COVID Rates</b>						
	August 15	September 12	October 10	October 24	November 7	November 14
Cases per 100,000 people	3.17	2.66	6.03	10.95	24.22	34.03
Percent Positivity	2.07	1.93	2.8	4.46	8.53	10.39
Percent CLI	1.49	1.32	2.15	3.06	4.73	6.81
CLI = COVID-Like Illness as % of Emergency Room Visits						
<b>NJDOH Transmission Score</b>						
	Low	Moderate	High	Very High		
Cases per 100,000 people	<1	1-10	10.01 - 25	>25		
Percent Positivity	<3	3-10	10.01 - 20	>20		
Percent CLI	<1.68	1.68 - 5.51	5.52 - 13.08	>13.08		

Based on the established [NJDOH guidance](#) to school districts, school districts should “consider” converting to remote instruction when the transmission risk in a community is “High;” at present, our region of New Jersey is considered to have “High” risk. At the same time, however, our local health officials shared with me that they have additional data not available to the public that is more granular. This data shows that in Chatham the level of transmission remains “Moderate,” even though our greater

region is “High.” For this reason, our local Departments of Health recommend that **schools remain open for in-person instruction for the first three days of next week.**

There are several caveats attached to this recommendation. Above all, the Department of Health recognizes that COVID rates in our region and throughout New Jersey are rapidly increasing. I will communicate with our health officials again by the end of next week to make determinations about the following week of school. I will communicate this determination to you by the end of Thanksgiving weekend. Please remain alert for updates and remain flexible as to school decisions.

Next, due to our region’s risk level, the Department of Health has advised that we must implement the following changes:

1. If a person becomes symptomatic of illness, then every household contact of that person must quarantine until the person acquires a medical diagnosis *other than* COVID. This means that if one of my children develops a fever and cough, my other child, my wife, and I all must quarantine. The only way we can stop the quarantine is to obtain a medical diagnosis for something other than COVID, such as strep throat, for example. Please do NOT send your child to school if another member of your household is ill.
2. If a person has taken a COVID test and is awaiting the result, then every household contact of that person must quarantine until the test result comes back and is negative.
3. The Department of Health has advised against the playing of any sports. While the NJSIAA has delayed the start of all school-based athletic programs, the school district will not permit other recreational athletic programs to take place in district facilities at the present time.
4. The Department of Health asked me to implore all members of the community to act responsibly this holiday. New Jersey’s [travel advisory](#) remains in effect and so do limits on indoor gatherings. Our local health officials are experiencing an increase in cases and also an increase in fatalities in their jurisdictions. They want our help to slow down or turn around what they are experiencing.

We are at a point in this school year where the mindset is now “day by day.” We will aim to make it to Thanksgiving with our schools open and then we will take it from there. I hope you are able to enjoy the holiday and connect with family in the coming week, even if it is in an unorthodox manner. Thank you again for helping us to make it to this point in the school year with students in school.

Sincerely,

Michael LaSusa