

'In the Loop' with the Lewiston-Porter Board of Education

Lew-Port awaits state direction on reopening

BY JODEE RIORDAN

Board of Education President

Lewiston-Porter is preparing for a return to a traditional five-day, in-person school week. Federal guidance has now changed, allowing for state guidance to follow.

At press time, state guidance has not yet changed, but a decision is anticipated soon. State guidance drives county-level decision-making and guidance, and school district operating procedures.

Let's take a look at what has happened, and what needs to happen to allow Lew-Port to move forward:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the national public health agency of the U.S., a federal agency, under the Department of Health and Human Services. When we say "trust the science," we are talking about the scientific guidance and expertise of the scientists and physicians at the CDC.

On Friday, March 19, the CDC updated the operational strategy for K-12 schools to reflect new evidence on physical distance in U.S. classrooms. These updated recommendations are specific to students in classrooms with universal mask wearing. The CDC now recommends that, with universal masking, students should maintain a distance of at least 3 feet in classroom settings. CDC has updated its operational strategy as follows:

- In elementary schools, CDC recommends all students remain at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal – regardless of whether community transmission is low, moderate, substantial or high.

- In middle and high schools, CDC also recommends students should be at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal and in communities where transmission is low, moderate or substantial.

Middle school students and high school students should be at least 6 feet apart in communities where transmission is high, if cohorting is not possible. "Cohorting" is when groups of students are kept together with the same peers and staff throughout the school day to reduce the risk for spread throughout the school. This recommendation is because COVID-19 transmission dynamics are different in older students – that is, they are more likely to be exposed to SARS-CoV-2 and spread it than younger children.

CDC continues to recommend at least 6 feet of distance:

- ✓ Between adults in the school building and between adults and students.

- ✓ In common areas, such as school lobbies and auditoriums.

- ✓ When masks can't be worn, such as when eating.

- ✓ During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports or exercise. These activities should be moved outdoors or to large, well-ventilated spaces whenever possible.

- ✓ In community settings outside of the classroom.

CDC guidance also:

- ✓ Clarified ventilation is a component of strategies to clean and maintain healthy facilities.

- ✓ Removed recommendation for physical barriers.

- ✓ Clarified the role of community transmission levels in decision-making.

- ✓ Added guidance on interventions when clusters occur.

The updated Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>) is part of CDC's existing resources for K-12 schools to open and remain open for in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The updated guidance complements CDC's existing guidance, resources and tools for K-12 schools.

"CDC is committed to leading with science and updating our guidance as new evidence emerges," CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky said. "Safe in-person instruction gives our kids access to critical social and mental health services that prepare them for the future, in addition to the education they need to succeed. These updated recommendations provide the evidence-based roadmap to help schools reopen safely, and remain open, for in-person instruction."

The CDC has updated its guidance. What happens now? The federal level changes outlined above now need to be adopted at the state level. In New York, this is done specifically by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and then by the New York State Department of Education (NYSED).

Those recommendations will guide the county departments of health and the individual school districts in their jurisdiction.

Lewiston-Porter is under the jurisdiction of the Niagara County Department of Health.

Niagara County Legislature Chairwoman Becky Wydysh and Public Health Director Daniel J. Stapleton stated they are in favor



of allowing school districts to fully reopen, provided districts can meet the new CDC criteria that calls for 3 feet of distance between students rather than 6 feet, and continue to meet the other existing opening guidelines. They are waiting on further clarification from New York state if it is now the county's decision to make.

In a press release this week, Stapleton said he has received many phone calls from superintendents, parents and teachers asking about the change in social distance guidelines and what that means for fully opening schools.

"My answer has been consistent: We either need the state to adopt the new CDC guideline or clearly acknowledge it is now up to the local health departments to make that call," he said.

"In either of those scenarios, it's full speed ahead. To be 100% clear, if the state says I have authority to adopt the CDC guidelines, I will do so immediately and school superintendents can begin preparing accordingly."

As of press time, there has been no new guidance from New York. We need to wait for the state to move on the new guidance from the CDC and determine changes in guidance. New York must adopt the distancing change and also clarify expectations for bus transportation, cafeterias, physical education, music education and more.

As Lew-Port Superintendent Paul Casseri has said – perhaps more than once over the past year: "The devil in the details." We do not yet have all the details,

nor do we have the approval to go forward with any operational changes at this point. Until that time, the Lewiston-Porter School District will continue to operate in accordance with its reopening plan.

While the district waits, planning is in full swing. Based on the information and the anticipated guidance from NYSDOH, Casseri said he expects Lewiston-Porter would return to full instruction in a phased approach after spring break (April 1-11).

We are now updating class rosters and bus runs, as well as beginning the process of repopulating desks in rooms to accommodate students. All families planning on changing their current learning model and/or transportation status are required to submit an updated "K-12 Return to Full Instruction Information Form" by 4 p.m. Friday March 26. Without a form, it will be assumed that, if a hybrid family does not respond, they wish to return to full five days of instruction; and if a full remote family does not respond, they wish to remain fully remote. It will also be assumed that families are continuing in their current transportation mode.

If your family did not complete the form, and needs to change learning model and/or transportation, please contact the district immediately.

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Cool News for Hot Flashes

Interrupted sleep, too hot, then cold, drenched with sweat – this is not normal just because you're in "change of life" or menopause. Menopause usually occurs around the late 40's or early 50's, but may happen earlier or later. It is considered "official" when no menstrual periods have occurred for 12 consecutive months. Although menopause should be a gradual, symptom free, natural transition; in industrialized countries it is often anything but!

Hot flashes can occur from stress or imbalance in a number of areas not simply the ovaries and uterus, such as kidneys, pituitary, thyroid, pancreas, adrenal glands or hypothalamus. Stress can come from food allergies, toxic build up within an organ or environmental toxins interfering with hormonal balance, just to name a few. Symptoms can occur long before any indications of problems show up in bloodwork.

What if you could find out what is causing your hot flashes? That could lead to a resolution of the problem. Nutrition Response TestingSM is a non-invasive system of analyzing the body to determine the underlying causes of ill or non-optimum health offered at our office.

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