



STATEMENT

PENNSBURY SCHOOL DISTRICT
134 YARDLEY AVENUE • P.O. BOX 338 • FALLSINGTON, PA 19058-0338
www.pennsburysd.org

Joint Statement Concerning the Reopening of Schools for the 2020-2021 Academic Year

by

School Board President TR Kannan and Superintendent Dr. William Gretzula

First, please allow us to express our gratitude. Thank you to all of the parents, guardians, students, faculty, and staff for sharing thoughtful feedback, concerns, and ideas about the reopening of schools.

The Pennsbury Board of School Directors and the administration are united in our deep commitment to meet the serious challenges presented by the international COVID-19 pandemic. We will prioritize health and safety while ensuring student success. We plan to achieve this by collaborative problem-solving and making changes and adjustments as warranted by the circumstances at hand.

At the last meeting, the Board voted to open the school year on September 8th, providing a full-virtual option for all grades while providing students with IEPs and 504 Plan accommodations the opportunity to physically attend in-person. In addition, an October 5th date was set for students to opt to return to classes in a yet-to-be-finalized hybrid model or remain in full-virtual instruction.

Amidst mounting concerns around issues of health and safety, and thorough review of practical constraints around staffing, continuing uncertainty, and an analysis of multiple staff and community survey results, the following changes are being recommended for consideration by the Board at the August 20th public School Board meeting.

- 1. Do not open our buildings on September 8th**, for our specialized learners, and instead meet their needs using specially designed instruction **in their home environment**, both virtually and in-person (when determined necessary by an individual child's team of professionals). This is supported by more than 150 teachers and nearly 140 paraprofessionals who indicated in staff surveys that they would be comfortable with going to students' homes in those rare instances.
- 2. Postpone the hybrid option until the end of the 2nd Marking Period**, which currently ends on Friday, January 29, 2021, for all students and focus all resources and efforts only on providing a robust virtual learning environment.
- 3. Meet all students' needs through a robust virtual learning model** that is synchronous, structured, and delivered by Pennsbury teachers using Pennsbury
(continued...)

curricula. Ensure this model is not the same learning experience that had to be delivered in an emergency fashion in the spring and is **similar to an in-person model** with accountability for both students and staff.

Focusing on a single model for all students removes the risk and complications involved with matching 10,000 students with approximately 850 professional and 650 support personnel staff members across two learning platforms. Also, due to personal and household health concerns of our employees, it has become obvious that numerous positions would need to be filled to offer any kind of in-person learning.

We understand and appreciate the challenges this creates for working families, concerns around mental health, lack of social interaction, and ability for students to learn online. We will continue to look at innovative options to address these issues.

Certainly, we are all united in the goal to resume an education plan that brings everyone together safely inside our school buildings. That is where we are meant to be, and that is where we will return - eventually. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor conditions pertaining to safety, staffing, and educational effectiveness as we move into the new school year. We look forward to a time when we can look back together with Pennsbury Pride and be grateful for our continuing collaboration and ongoing achievements.