



# Washington Township Schools

~ A Community of 21st-Century Learners ~

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[WWW.WTSCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.WTSCHOOLS.ORG)



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## **HIGH IMPORTANCE: WTS COMMUNICATION for FAMILIES & STAFF**

November 19, 2020

Dear Washington Township Schools Families, Staff and Faculty,

As we experience Week #12 of our instructional model together, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank you for adjusting so readily to the changes we have seen in the children's school year. The adults of our fine community are forever demonstrating their unwavering support and devotion to our young people and THAT always matters most of all.

With the number of COVID-19 cases rising in across the Nation and locally, a very different public health landscape has emerged over the past few weeks. Earlier today, the New Jersey Department of Health released its current COVID-19 Activity Level Report which indicates that our county and most NJ counties are now reporting "HIGH" activity levels. Due to this latest data, and the projected rise in positive cases expected during the Thanksgiving recess, it is with a heavy heart that I announce that WTS will enter into full remote/at-home learning for at least two weeks following the Thanksgiving holiday. The remote/at-home learning period (November 30 through December 11) will be extended should the need arise based on forthcoming data received from the New Jersey Department of Health and our Local Board of Health. Therefore, I would be remiss if I did not encourage parents and staff to begin pondering plans for a longer-term full remote/at-home learning period. I understand the challenges this announcement brings and certainly wanted to make you aware of the current situation as quickly as possible following the information I received earlier today.

At this point schools will remain open leading up to Thanksgiving and our current schedules and health/safety protocols will remain in effect. Our esteemed Principals will be communicating directly with you shortly regarding school schedules for the remote learning period. During my phone conference with our Local Board of Health this morning, I was once again informed that there is no evidence to indicate any in-school transmissions of COVID-19. We need everyone to remain vigilant in order to promote the overall wellness of our school community. Our choices matter, our collective support of one another matters, the reminders we thoughtfully give to others matter ... Thank you!

It is important for everyone to be aware that the personal health and close contact guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health changes when a region is deemed to have high activity levels as is the case here in Morris County. Children/staff who are physically present at school and display two (2) or more of the following symptoms (Fever, Chills, Rigors, Myalgia (muscle aches), Headache, Sore Throat, Nausea/Vomiting, Diarrhea, Fatigue, Congestion or Runny Nose) will be sent home per our current protocol. However, close contacts of the child or staff member will also be sent home and enter into remote learning for fourteen calendar days from the date of last contact until the ill individual receives an alternate diagnosis or tests negative for COVID-19. The same guidelines apply if a person exhibits one (1) or more of the following symptoms (Cough, Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing, New Loss of Smell, New

Loss of Taste). The new guidelines also apply when, for example, a child is present in school on her/his "A" Day and develops symptoms of illness the very next day during her/his Remote Learning Day. If this scenario emerges, contact tracing will occur based on the child's close contact with anyone inside the school during the previous 48 hours. The new guidelines will be in effect tomorrow (Friday, November 20) when children and staff return to school. Although this will be a moot point during our post-Thanksgiving period of remote/at-home learning, everyone needs to be aware of these new State guidelines on the school days leading up to Thanksgiving. We need everyone's utmost diligence in monitoring personal health on a daily basis. Anyone experiencing any symptoms of illness over these next few days will need to stay at home.

Thank you for taking the time to read this important school-home communication. I (along with countless others I am certain) am truly grateful for every in-person learning moment our students have had these past twelve weeks. Our staff and faculty have been truly extraordinary throughout, as have our students' parents ... and, of course, the children! Together you have supported our young people so mightily during these times of pandemic uncertainty and I know that support (and care) will never waver. Rest assured that WTS will maintain a watchful eye on the COVID-19 Activity Level information disseminated weekly by the NJ Department of Health. It is my hope that WTS will be able to reopen the schoolhouse doors sooner rather than later and that the news of promising vaccines coupled with future declines in NJ's COVID-19 cases will present all children the opportunity to return to their schools full-time this school year.

I wish our entire WTS Family a safe and joyous Thanksgiving holiday. Your spirit of caring, perseverance, and gratitude throughout this pandemic period is deeply appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey S. Mohre". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeffrey S. Mohre

c. Washington Township Board of Education; Washington Township Board of Health