

AMESBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ELIZABETH MCANDREWS
ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



5 Highland Street
Amesbury, MA 01913

JOAN LIPORTO
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
AND OPERATIONS

LYN JACQUES
DIRECTOR OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING

LYNN CATARIUS
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Good evening,

This evening I met with the School Committee to discuss the status of our learning models as part of Checkpoint #3, which is detailed in our District's Reopening Plan. As you all know, since assuming the role of Acting Superintendent, it has been my top priority to provide the opportunity for all of our students to return to an in-person learning experience. Many families have shared that having students back in the buildings has helped to provide their children with a small piece of normalcy. I, too, have felt this in my own home.

Our school nurses, in conjunction with our public health nurses, have carefully tracked the number of positive cases for both students and staff in our schools. Despite the increase in the number of cases city and state-wide, I believe that one of the safest places for students to be is in school. While we have had students in school who have tested positive, at this time, we have zero evidence that indicates that COVID-19 is spreading in any of our schools. Speaking with our public health nurses and Chief Berkenbush, they confirm this to be true as well. I have confirmed this with both public health nurses and Chief Berkenbush.

Despite the precautions that we have in place, students and staff alike have been identified as "close contacts", which results in a minimum of 10 days of quarantining. Recently, the number of staff members quarantining has made it challenging for building principals to find appropriate coverage for classrooms. Through an incredible amount of teamwork from staff members in each building, we have met the demand for coverage in most buildings. As additional staff members need to quarantine, we are left with a reduced number of staff members in the building which precludes us from adhering to our COVID safety protocols at the necessary levels. As families of middle school students know, I have temporarily returned AMS to a remote learning model because of staffing challenges. Unfortunately, tonight I will have to make this decision for the entire district. Beginning this Thursday, December 17th, all schools in the district will return to a remote learning model. For all students in grades 2-12, we will revert to the remote learning schedule. Kindergarten and grade 1 students will follow the AM/PM cohort model, but will do so remotely. Tier 1 students will attend in-person classes for Thursday (weather permitting) and Friday at all grade spans. Tier 1 students will learn remotely on Monday, December 21st and Tuesday, December 22nd. Wednesday, December 23rd will be an asynchronous half day for all students. Each building principal will follow up my message with their own, more detailed message at some point tomorrow.

In addition, lunches will be provided tomorrow, Wednesday, December 16th and Monday, December 21st at Amesbury High School from 11am to 12:30pm. Each day's bags will contain three lunches and three breakfasts. Tier 1 students will be served lunches on Thursday, December 17th (weather permitting) and Friday, December 18th. Lunches will not be provided over the holiday break.

I want to be clear, this is a temporary shift back to a remote learning model due to staffing challenges in our buildings. It is not because schools are unsafe or that there is evidence of COVID-19 spreading in our buildings. The School Committee and I have agreed that this temporary shift to remote will be in place from Thursday, December 17th through Wednesday, December 23rd. Beginning on Monday, January 4th, 2021, we will return to the approved hybrid models for all buildings.

Please stay safe,

Elizabeth McAndrews

Acting Superintendent
Amesbury Public Schools