

Bethlehem schools hybrid, Allentown virtual

The Bethlehem Gadfly coronavirus, Education July 27, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the coronavirus* 

“Lehigh Valley has highest number of new cases”

Morning Call, July 26

Find full Bethlehem reopening info and a good video by Dr. Roy [here](#)
from Jacqueline Palochko, “Bethlehem schools looking to reopen with both in-person and online classes.” Morning Call, July 24, 2020.

Bethlehem’s full “Back to School Plan and Summary” can be
found in this article.

Bethlehem Area schools will likely reopen next month using a hybrid approach that allows for both in-person instruction and online learning.

The plan, which was announced Friday afternoon and will be voted on by the school board on Aug. 10, calls for students with last names beginning with A-L to attend school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while others learn online. Those with M-Z last names will go on Wednesdays and Fridays as the others do virtual classes. All students will learn online on Mondays.

Elementary class sizes will average 10 students per day. Middle and high school classes sizes will have about 15 students per day.

Parents who prefer to have their children do virtual classes full time can enroll them in either the BASD Cyber Academy for the entire first marking period or the BASD e-classroom, which is a new program and allows students to transfer to physical classrooms by October. The e-classroom program will be taught by district teachers, some of whom cannot return to the classroom because of conditions that put them at

higher risk of serious complications from the coronavirus. Registration for both ends Aug. 5.

If an individual tests positive for the coronavirus, families and students will be notified, but the district does not intend to shut down any schools or classrooms.

All students and teachers will wear masks in Bethlehem schools, following the state's requirement. Parents are expected to provide face coverings, hand sanitizer and disposable cleaning wipes for their children. Tape on floor and signs in English and Spanish will remind students and staff to stay 6 feet apart.

Desks must be 6 feet from each other, when possible, and all facing the same direction.

Children who have different last names but live in the same household can attend school on the same day using the last name of the oldest child. Buses and bathrooms will be cleaned twice a day. At lunchtime, students will be seated in staggered arrangements to avoid sitting close to each other.

from Jacqueline Palochko, "Allentown School District to reopen schools virtually with hope of in-person classes later in fall." Morning Call, July 24, 2020.

"The reality behind COVID is that it is taking lives," [Superintendent Parker] said, during a virtual meeting that drew a large audience.

The board unanimously approved the plan for virtual learning, making Allentown the first Lehigh Valley district to keep school online when it resumes on Sept. 8. It's a move that comforts parents worried about the virus but concerns those with children who need extra academic help.

Classes will start on schedule, Sept. 8, and the district hopes it can have in-person classes by November. Parker said it wasn't an easy decision to

recommend virtual learning for the area's biggest school district, but he felt there were too many unknowns to allow the district's 17,000 students, as well as staff, back in classrooms.

When the Allentown district surveyed parents this month, 60% said they were not comfortable sending their children back to school. Before the board voted Thursday, a number of parents spoke about the plan during two hours of public comment.

The district promised that online learning in the fall would be more robust and comprehensive than it was in the spring. It will expand the use of technology, including creating a model that will allow every student to receive a device. It will also develop external partnerships to support digital access for all students.

Even though it seems as if the area is in a better situation with the virus than it was in the spring, Allentown is still not in a good place, Allentown Health Bureau Director Vicky Kistler said at the meeting. There have been cases after day cares and public places such as restaurants and bars reopened, she said. "We have not yet learned to live with this virus," she said.

For districts like Allentown, which has a number of crowded, old buildings, those guidelines are hard to follow because of limited space.