

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

Lewiston-Porter family forums to continue

BY JODEE RIORDAN

Board of Education President

Parents, faculty and staff, administrators, the Board of Education, everyone is focused right now on reopening Lewiston-Porter schools.

We are moving forward to open Tuesday, Sept. 8, in the hybrid model outlined in our plan. The Lew-Port plan allows students to attend school in person or choose a 100% remote learning option. As parents decide what the best option is for their children, we are committed to providing all the information we can to support our families.

This week, Lewiston-Porter held the first of its "Family Forum" series. The forums offer parents an opportunity for parents to review and ask specific questions regarding our plan. Scheduled dates to come include:

- Primary level forum (PEC and IEC: grades K-5) – noon, Wednesday Aug. 19; and 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 26.

- Secondary level forum (middle school and high school: grades 6-12) – noon, Thursday Aug. 20; and 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 27.

Each forum is being held in the high school auditorium, with social distancing protocols in place.

Attendance at each forum is limited to 50 parents per event, with only one parent per family. The events will also be hosted live in a virtual, interactive format. Families who attend virtually will be able to submit questions live online during the forums.

To register to attend in-person, or for the links for each virtual meeting, go to "Community Forums" in the "COVID-19 Communication & Information Center" on the Lewiston-Porter website, www.lew-port.com.

Each family must complete the learning and transportation commitment form. The form is also located in the "COVID-19 Communication & Information Center." The deadline has been extended through Friday, Aug. 28, following the final forum.

We encourage parents to do so as soon as possible. This information is critical to planning for both teaching and learning, and to determine accurate bus routes. It is vital that we understand exactly how many families we are serving through 100% remote learning to place faculty and staff appropriately.

Parents who opt for remote learning will be asked to remain in full remote learning through the

Cuomo sets Friday deadline

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday announced a Friday deadline for school districts that have not submitted plans for in-person learning. His office claimed 107 school districts had not submitted a plan for in-person learning. Districts that fail to meet the Friday deadline will be unable to provide in-person learning this year.

The state continues to review plans based on set criteria. Districts that are found to be out of compliance will get a letter from the State Department of Health today and a follow-up call naming the sections of their plans that are deficient, in which case they will have until Friday to amend their plan.

The governor also reminded districts they must complete the three to five public sessions with parents and teachers and post their plans for remote learning, testing and tracing on their website by Aug. 21 to be in compliance with standards established by the state.

Senior Adviser to the Governor Rich Azzopardi released a statement doubling-down on the press release.

"The list of districts that didn't file a plan with the state Department of Health is accurate. Despite clear guidance provided to these schools, which included a link to the DOH portal, some districts in follow-up calls said they filed with the State Education Department – which is not an executive agency – but didn't file with DOH. Others filled out an affirmation certifying that they would be abiding by the state's reopening guid-

ance, but didn't actually submit their plan, something many of these districts are now rectifying."

The list of local school districts that supposedly did not submit a plan included Franklinville, Salamanca, Sloan, Williamsville, Wyoming and Lewiston-Porter.

Lewiston-Porter Central School District Superintendent Paul Casseri said, "We 100% did submit on July 31 and I have resubmitted again today." He explained DOH indicated a computer problem was present that day. Casseri was not pleased the state opted to release these names in this manner.

School Board President Jodee Riordan said, "Lewiston-Porter has been on top of and completely transparent with meeting every aspect of these plans. We go out of our way to work cooperatively with every government entity, especially challenging to do as their rules change day to day. If NYDOH knew there was a computer issue, I'd hope they would have reached out directly to each district on this list. This could have been handled much more professionally."

She added, "NYDOH should be working with all districts on how to conduct testing/tracing, which we are all scrambling to address since the governor added these requirements late last week."

"Shaming districts over what will amount to computer glitches or clerical errors does not help further anything, especially public trust."

first 10 weeks of school. Families can rejoin the hybrid model or any other shift in our plan after 10 weeks.

Visit the Lewiston-Porter website for complete information. Click the "COVID-19 RE-OPEN-

ING" tab on the homepage to be directed to the "COVID-19 Communication & Information Center." There you will have access to all plans, FAQs, documents, forms and a complete archive of COVID-19 communication from

Superintendent Paul Casseri.

The Board of Education is actively involved in all aspects of reopening. We are working closely with administration and attending all forums. The board meets next at 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 24.

State officials answer common questions

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"Indoors is what you want to avoid. And as maybe different as outdoor learning sounds, I think it makes sense – to the extent you can do it."

Testing

Almost a month ago, Cuomo announced new, data-driven guidance for reopening schools in New York. Schools in a phase four region can reopen if the daily coronavirus infection rate remains below 5% or lower using a 14-day average.

Schools will close – or go back to remote learning – if the regional infection rate rises above 9%, using a seven-day rolling average, after Aug. 1.

On Friday, Cuomo said, "Department of Health guidance did reference testing. But where testing is coming up is from the local school districts' plans. Because the local school districts' plans bring up testing. If you look at the plans, most of them will say, 'We're going to do this, this, this, this, and then we're going to take a temperature of a student. And if the student has a temperature, then they go into the isolation room.' That then triggers (the question) about asymptomatic spread. The student never had a temperature. Good question. But, student had a temperature, they go into the isolation room. They then get tested."

"Oh, they get tested. How, where?" Let's say it's not one student. The school has 1,000 students. How many students in a morning will have a temperature, if you have 1,000 students? Let's take a guess. Fifty? Twenty-five? OK, those students go into an isolation room. And then they have to get tested. How do we test those students? Does the parent have to test them? Do they get tested at school? Do you need the parent's permission to test them? Do you call up the city to test them? How

do you test those students?

"These are questions coming up in the plan themselves. And most plans reference testing. And that's where it came from."

Malatras added, "The DOH guidance requires, for symptomatic students, that a testing plan be in place for those schools. But on the screening piece of asymptomatic and other students, schools must develop protocols and procedures for mandatory health screening. That could include testing and other things, but it must as a baseline include temperature checks in all plans."

"So, testing has been part of many of the districts' plans on screening side, and it is required on testing of symptomatic students and others within a district."

What about HIPAA?

A question has been posed by school administrators regarding how to identify a student (or teacher) who tests positive for the coronavirus without violating that individual's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act right of privacy. How can a school or school district quarantine a class without knowing who has the virus?

Malatras said, "This program has to work with the contact tracing program. There's already been several examples of this happening across the state. One recent example in Westchester County, where there was a positive result of a teacher's aide, which resulted in testing of the entire classroom, and then isolation of those students. While you can still protect the student's name and identification, it can be worked out with the local health department – to the contact tracing program – as well as the subsequent testing, regardless. Like in many other cases, we could still protect student privacy while also conducting testing and other

things to keep the classroom safe."

Cuomo said, "This is the essence of contact tracing all across the board, right? HIPAA isn't just for children; HIPAA is for everyone. And contact tracing is, 'We can protect your identity and privacy, but we can use the information to protect others.'"

To Summarize ...

Cuomo said, "Just remember the context here for this conversation, please. The state says, 'Here's the viral infection rate.' Thank God, in this state, we can authorize all schools to reopen, given the viral infection rate. It then turns to them and their plan."

"They can do in-person school. But it is up to them. In-person, hybrid, outdoor education, remote education, a blend, half-day, quarter-day, third-day – that is all up to their discretion."

"The main questions that have been asked: contact tracing, separate plan – get it up (online); testing, separate plan, get it up; and remote learning, and how do you fix what we learned from the first (school closing), mandatory, if you will."

"Discussions with parents, at least three ... between now and Aug. 21; and at least one session just with teachers, because we need the parents and the teachers."

"Ventilation systems – all these questions, have to be brought up and discussed on a local level."

"But again, it's good news. If any state can do this, we can do this; not just because of our infection rate, but because we've been smarter than any other state, as a people, in dealing with this. And I believe in New Yorkers, and New Yorkers can do it – and New Yorkers will decide what they want to do, and how they want to do it, with school district by school district."

Niagara Wheatfield CSD community education to return this fall

As the Niagara Wheatfield Central School District continues to prepare for reopening in September, the community education program intends to follow suit. With much caution and concern for public health, classes will be offered online during the month of September, and reintroduce in-person classes with discretion thereafter. At this time, class registration is now open.

Students are invited to take part in returning classes including: canvas painting, college preparation, computer literacy, driver's education, fitness, mindfulness, and spiritual wellbeing. Students can also consider exploring entirely new classes in essential oils, graphic design, Latin aerobics, low-tox living, psychic development, singing, and writing. Themed and seasonal classes will welcome the introduction of couples' cooking

events plus a special paranormal presentation for Halloween.

Whatever one's interest, there is a fun and engaging learning experience waiting through community education.

To get started, visit the NW community education website and online catalog to discover all the classes being offered. Students can register online through the catalog, send in a registration form (available at the district offices), or call the community education coordinator for additional help.

Full contact information can be found below:

√ Website: <https://www.nwcsd.org/Page/374>

√ Catalog: <https://nwcsd.coursestorm.com/>

√ Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NWCSDCommunityEd/>

√ Email: pnichols@nwcsd.org

√ Phone: 215-3034

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