

WEST ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Damion Maciocci

Superintendent of Schools

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Dear West Essex Families,

After consultation with our local health officials and at the recommendation of our District Physician, we have decided to close our schools for in-person learning for the 2 weeks following Thanksgiving, beginning Monday, November 30 through Friday, December 11. The [WERSD Daily Calendar and Bell Schedules](#) have been updated to reflect this change.

While there is no substitute for in-person learning, we must approach these upcoming weeks with careful consideration. Our ability to resume our hybrid model and potentially move to increased capacities is largely dependent on public health data and the safe and responsible behaviors of our entire community. Furthermore, increased cooperation is essential from our families regarding travel notification and keeping children home when immediate household members are sick, exhibiting symptoms, or awaiting COVID-19 test results.

As previously communicated, our Northeast Region (Bergen, Essex, and Hudson) is now in the [High Risk](#) category. Under the "High Risk" protocols, all individuals who are COVID-19 positive or those with compatible symptoms must follow the same exclusion criteria as outlined by the [NJDOH](#). This process alone has resulted in a large number of staff and students being subject to quarantine and inhibits our ability to execute our hybrid model in an optimal environment. Although we are not experiencing transmission in our buildings, our schools are experiencing a high degree of impact, including lower student attendance and a higher number of employees teleworking.

Additionally, the approaching holiday gatherings, potential travel implications, and family members returning from college greatly increase the likelihood of transmission. In the event there are cases following the holiday weekend, school and health officials will complete the appropriate contact tracing without the risk of exposure in our schools. Typically individuals become symptomatic between 2-14 days following exposure; therefore, we feel the 2 week closure for in-person learning is prudent. This period will allow us time to identify individuals who may develop COVID-19 symptoms, as well as time for those individuals to self-isolate, as appropriate.

Please know we support and care about you and your families, and the health and well-being of your children and loved ones will continue to be a top priority.

Thank you for your continued support and happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Damion Maciocci

Damion Maciocci, Superintendent of Schools