

# WEST ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Superintendent of Schools

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October 13, 2020

Dear West Essex Families,

This is a follow-up to my October 11 correspondence. As of today, four additional individuals in our school district have tested positive for COVID-19, including one case at the middle school and three cases at the high school. At this time, our district has a total of 15 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19: West Essex Middle School (4) and West Essex High School (11). Federal and state laws strictly prohibit the release of private health information of any individual.

Please know we are working closely with our public health experts to ensure we identify anyone that must be quarantined. As we gain additional information that affects any of our families, students, or staff, we will make that information available to you, and if you are contacted by local health officials, your cooperation is critical for this process. The status of this situation remains fluid, and we will continue to monitor it closely.

With that said, after consultation with our local health officials and our District Physician, it was decided to close our schools for a minimum of 14 days before bringing any students and staff back for in-person learning. This period of time is sufficient so that individuals in the school community who may develop symptoms as a result of exposure could be identified and self-isolate, as appropriate ([NJDOH, 2020](#)).

**Therefore, the West Essex Regional School District will remain on our Distance Learning Plan through Friday, October 23. All in-person extra-curricular activities and athletics will be postponed during this closure.**

The ACT test scheduled for Saturday, October 17 has been postponed; however, we are in communication with ACT and are exploring the option of rescheduling the test.

As mentioned in previous notifications, it was determined these cases are linked through exposure outside the school setting, resulting in a **significant** number of families, students, and staff having to quarantine, but this investigation is on-going as the health department is still continuing with their analysis, which includes patient interviewing and contact tracing.

As I have emphasized in several messages, public health is a shared responsibility, and we all play a critical role in protecting our students, staff, and community from exposure to this virus. The choices we make moving forward will directly impact the functioning of our schools.

In any event, I must reiterate the need for full cooperation and commitment from our entire school community. We also require your assistance in reminding and encouraging your family, friends, and members of the public to observe the following guidelines **without exception**:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash hands often with soap for at least 20 seconds.
- Limit close contact with people who are sick and avoid sharing food, drinks, and utensils.
- Practice social distancing (staying at least 6 feet apart).
- Wear a face covering while in school and outside of school when applicable.
- Continue to monitor your health for symptoms.

You can expect continued communication from the District as information becomes available. In addition, building principals will send an updated calendar and schedule for the Distance Learning Plan to include the week of October 19.

Please know we support and care about you and your families, and the health and well-being of your children and loved ones are of the highest priority.

Sincerely,

*Damion Macioci*

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