



Important Message from Kristen Bishop, Head of School

November 13, 2020

Dear Avon Grove Charter School Families,

I am writing to you to provide you updates from our special board meeting held this week, regarding COVID-19 and the hybrid model of instruction.

Since the start of the year we have followed the Chester County Health Department's recommendations in determining how students were receiving instruction (virtual or hybrid). Every Friday, we share the Chester County Community Transmission Chart with the most recent statistics. According to the transmission chart, COVID-19 incident and positivity rates from the past two weeks have landed us in the "very high" community transmission band, which would mean a return to a virtual learning setting.

This week the Chester County Health Department updated their guidance, thus indicating that transitioning to a more virtual instructional model can be considered when thresholds for incidence rates and positivity are met **for three (3) consecutive weeks instead of two (2)**. The AGCS board voted on Wednesday, November 18th, to follow the three week guidance and **continue in-person, hybrid instruction until November 27th**.

The next AGCS Board Meeting will be on Tuesday, November 17th. At this time the Board will review the most recent data and vote on the model for instruction for November 30th through the holidays. Our goal is to keep students in school, as long as health officials tell us it is safe. However, the community transmission of the virus is accelerating quickly. According to health officials and contact tracers, most of this is due to gatherings taking place in the community and rec league sports. The CHOP policy lab also released information this week suggesting that schools in the Philadelphia area revert to remote learning until after the New Year. Montgomery County voted today to close schools from November 23rd-December 6th. The Chester County Health Department has confirmed it is not making that recommendation to school districts at this time. Therefore, schools in Chester County are tasked with deciding how to operate under these circumstances.

As educators without medical backgrounds, we must rely on the guidance of health officials. This guidance changes frequently and is often conflicting and contradictory. The recommendation changes week to week, if not day by day. We know that each community member has their own views on how we should operate during the pandemic. There are no easy or 'right' answers and simply no way to accommodate everyone's needs. We have seen how important it is for our students to be in school. I want to commend our AGCS community for how they have implemented the hybrid model. We will continue to turn to health officials and do all we can to keep our AGCS community safe.

Here's what we know as of November 11:



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- Once we learn of a case in our schools, we aggressively quarantine staff and students. Of the 3 confirmed cases we have had since August, none have been transmitted in schools. All have been brought into our schools from the community.
- It is becoming increasingly more difficult to operate our schools when we are short-staffed during these quarantine periods. We have increased our daily substitute pay rate and continue to work to find various solutions to a regional, state, and nationwide substitute teaching shortage.
- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, AGCS has been following guidelines established by the Chester County Health Department (CCHD). We are meeting regularly with the CCHD to monitor the most recent COVID-19 cases in our area.
 - [Public school guidance from the CCHD with updated table](#)
 - The Chester County Health Department provides weekly updates to residents via [COVID-19 Protecting Our Progress](#), reporting the spread of COVID-19.
- Additionally, there are other factors that we need to consider regarding instructional models when making any decision:
 - COVID-19 community spread in classrooms & individual school buildings.
 - Lack of bus drivers (Krapf Bus joins with other companies around our region, state, and nation experiencing a driver shortage) to cover necessary runs to get students to and from school for the day if they have to quarantine or become positive.
 - Teacher, school nurse, custodial absence rate due to quarantine or positive cases. Without enough staff, we cannot cover our health and safety plan or cover in-person classrooms to ensure the safety and welfare of students.

There is one thing upon which health experts continue to agree- For schools to remain open, our community must vigilantly guard against spreading the virus: wear masks, stay six feet apart, and do not hold or attend large gatherings or parties - especially if they don't include these measures.

If you plan to travel to one of the states, please quarantine your children from school for two weeks, upon your return. [Travel ban list](#)

According to CCHD, the community is where most of the new cases are originating. Meanwhile, please continue to use the [daily COVID-19 checklist](#) and monitor your child's health each day before sending them to school.

If you would prefer your child to transition from the hybrid learn model to remote learning because of this news you can do so at any time. Please call the attendance office and they will accommodate your request.



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A survey will be going out to hybrid families only. If your children are receiving in-person instruction, please take a minute and fill out this important survey on the various options for instruction. The feedback will be taken into consideration when the Board convenes on Tuesday, November 17th.

We encourage our families and community members to view next week's board meeting on Tuesday, November 17th at 7:30pm. The public may access the live stream of the public meeting by [visiting http://bit.ly/agcslive](http://bit.ly/agcslive)

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we continue to deal with the complexities of COVID-19.

Stay safe,

Kristen Bishop