



2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR UPDATE

Dear Greencastle-Antrim School District Families,

Thank you for following us on this unprecedented journey this summer. We recognize the difficulty it is to fully plan and prepare with so many unknowns. Therefore, we would like to provide you with as much updated information as we can, knowing that we are in a constant state of change. What will not change, however, is our commitment to providing every child with a quality education whether in-person, or virtually.

We are continuing to watch the increasing numbers of cases in Franklin County and heavily relying on the CDC recommendations as well as the Pennsylvania State Departments of Health and Education recommendations for a safe return to school. We are most appreciative for your quick response to the surveys which indicated that over 90% of our families plan to return to the buildings. With the high numbers of students returning, and our commitment to making every effort to reflect your advocacy for in-person learning, we need to take some significant safety precautions that will enable us to mitigate any potential spread of the virus. The questions that surfaced focused on three primary areas of concern:

- Food Service and Lunch Routines
- Classroom Environment
- District Response to Positive Cases

At this time, we will be adhering to the face covering mandate and expecting all students and staff to wear a face covering (cloth mask or face shield) that covers their nose and mouth inside the school and while outside when physical distancing is not feasible (unless a medical or mental health condition or disability that is documented in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of IDEA, precludes the wearing of a face covering in school). We will provide face covering breaks throughout the day. We will also maintain a distance of at least 6 feet during those breaks. Students will be able to remove face coverings when they are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart;
- Seated at desks or assigned workspaces at least 6 feet apart;
- Engaged in any activity at least 6 feet apart;
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

Many of our students will be required to eat in the classrooms unless we can accommodate groups seated at 6 feet apart. Our staff will be making every effort to create learning spaces that can accommodate 6 feet of distance for longer periods of time for students and we will encourage outdoor learning and dining when possible!

We are developing a screening protocol in coordination with several medical professionals to include our response to positive cases. By increasing our safety measures, we are significantly reducing the risk of widespread contamination that may result in a full school shutdown. We are also organizing our class groups in grades K through 8 in cohorts, reducing interaction to the extent feasible, so that, should a positive case surface, we can shift smaller groups exposed to a quarantine virtual learning environment for 14 days, rather than the full district. It is possible that if we have fully adhered to the safety measures in place, the quarantine may be unnecessary. Again, we will await medical guidance in this area.

We know that this is not the environment that we envision when picturing classrooms and schools. However, we believe that there are benefits to making every effort to bring our students back for in-person instruction. As

articulated in the CDC recommendations for a safe reopening of our schools, “our schools play a critical role in supporting the whole child, not just the academic achievement of students:

- Social and emotional health of students can be enhanced through schools.
- Mental health of students can be fostered through school supports and services.
- Continuity of other special services is important for student success”.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 23, 2020)

We want our students to be safe, and comfortable in our buildings and will continuously work to create an environment conducive to both. While we continue to prepare for our reopening, I humbly ask our community to maintain a positive demeanor and sense of hope for our children. We will closely monitor and adjust to best meet the needs of each child. In the meantime, I would like to focus our district and community attention on clarifying what we hope for our children at the conclusion of their education in our district. While our route to achieving our destination may vary this year, the destination will not. Our mission states that we are a community invested in empowering our students to strive for excellence to succeed in the future.

It is NOW, more than ever, important that we work together to define what success will be for our students.

- What are the hopes, aspirations, and dreams that our community has for our young people?**
- What are the skills and habits of mind that our children need for success in this rapidly changing and complex world?**

I ask that we, as a community, engage over the next few weeks in discussions that address these questions. In early August, we will send out a form that will ask those willing to share their voices to respond to these two questions so that we may develop a clearly articulated Portrait of a Graduate. From there, we will be better equipped to tackle financial planning and curriculum development prioritizing our mission. Let this be an exciting time as we envision our future. While this pandemic is unnerving for many of us, it is also opening a new horizon for learning, living, and working. Imagine how our children will be able to navigate global industries, provide services, own businesses, and much more from their own homes and computers, perhaps right from Greencastle, Pennsylvania!

We will get through this pandemic together, and will be stronger, wiser, and likely more efficient in providing the highest quality education available to our children. They need us to be strong in this, so that they can graduate, take over, and allow us time to rest! I am so very proud to lead this adventure and embrace the opportunity. I am certain, that our entire community will be proud of this district as we face the coming year with resilience and a renewed energy for educating our youth. Dream big and discuss with neighbors, friends, and even on social media about what we see as the future of GA! These discussions will assist in completing the form in August.

For those still considering whether to join us on this journey in person, or using our virtual learning opportunity, you may find comfort in knowing that our staff will be welcoming international education expert and renowned author, Doug Fisher, whose latest resource for digital learning is quickly skyrocketing to the leading educational resource for this time. His [Digital Learning Playbook](#) for K-12 teachers centers on the belief that “effective teaching is effective teaching, no matter where it occurs.” With his continued support and guidance, we will not only do this right, we will do it exceedingly well!

With much appreciation,

Lura A. Hanks

Lura A. Hanks, D.O.L.
Superintendent of Schools

A **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQ) document is being developed. Questions can be emailed to FAQ@gcasd.org