



HADDON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

Broadcast

Good afternoon,

Yesterday afternoon, after I distributed district correspondence regarding school schedule changes, many emails came in that contained very similar questions. I am attempting to respond to each email individually, so please be patient with my responses. In the meantime, I have listed some FAQs below around some common themes and hope they are helpful.

- If state regulations allow online learning for students directly affected by COVID-19 who are not permitted to attend school in person, then how can other districts surrounding us switch on remote-only education? **Remote-only education is allowed universally should school districts not have the ability to properly staff schools or for COVID transmission rates; what is not permitted is offering an online option for individual students (other than COVID related), while in-person instruction is being offered simultaneously.**
- Why is Child Care closing at 3 PM, instead of 6 PM? **The employees who work our child care program are part-time and are restricted to under 30 hours per week because of the Federal Affordable Health Care Act. If the district allows these part-time employees to exceed 30 hours, we could potentially face serious financial penalties following a district audit. We are also facing significant staffing issues in this program and are doing everything we can to offer it until 3 PM.**
- How can the district allow Child Care or K-Club program students a safe opportunity to eat lunch while not the other students? **After dismissal, these students represent a smaller percentage of students, and we can utilize the entire school building to spread them out generously. For all other students, spacing at lunch is generally 3-6 feet of distance without a mask, which we are currently not 100% confident is a safe distance with Omicron.**
- Since more than half the total number of cases in the district came over winter break, doesn't it show that students are safer in school compared to out of school? Therefore, why not remain in for a full day? **Not necessarily, while there is a statistical correlation between being off from school and the increasing number of cases, there is no proven causation. What we do believe to be true is the Omicron variant is more contagious, and grouping students together unmasked could be increasingly problematic (although we are still evaluating this in consultation with the department of health and the medical community).**

- Why are we not transitioning to full remote at this time like other districts? **Each district has their own individual factors to consider. We firmly believe that in-person live instruction is more beneficial for both students and staff. We believe this is true for all subgroups from both a teaching and learning perspective and as well as from a social/emotional lens. Particular groups of at-risk learners and our youngest students are even more affected by a sweeping decision to transition to district-wide full remote instruction. We will re-evaluate our data on Friday and communicate our plans for next week. We will consider all options, including a return to full days, full remote instruction, or remote for particular grade levels or classrooms where there may be staffing shortages.**

Lastly, I recognize how difficult last-minute or short-term changes can be for parents and educators alike; I certainly empathize with you regarding some of the unintended consequences of scheduling changes. However, I don't believe there is any long-term concrete and more effective way to make plans. One of the lessons learned on this pandemic journey is that this virus is incredibly unpredictable. Thank you very much for your patience and flexibility as we fight our way through this latest challenge. I appreciate your support and have a great day.

-Sincerely,

Robert J. Fisicaro, Ed. D. Superintendent