
SHS & BMS/CMS Status Update

Fri, Nov 13, 2020 at 3:42 PM

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From: **Thomas Scarice** <jbayers@westportps.org>
Date: Fri, Nov 13, 2020 at 3:03 PM
Subject: SHS & BMS/CMS Status Update
To: <jbayers@westportps.org>

Dear Westport Families and Staff,

As you know we had to move Staples High School and Bedford/Coleytown Middle School to remote learning on November 12th and 13th. The main cause for this temporary switch to remote learning was our inability to properly staff these schools given the number placed in quarantine from exposures to positive COVID-19 cases. Unfortunately the number of staff put into quarantine at Staples High School has continued to rise significantly over the past two days impacting our decision about the status of both schools for next week.

Starting Monday, November 16th, Staples High School will remain in a full remote teaching model through November 25th. The majority of our staff in quarantine will be coming out of that status over the Thanksgiving Holiday weekend, so we anticipate Staples returning to hybrid operation on November 30th.

Starting Monday, November 16th, Bedford/Coleytown Middle School will return to its hybrid model for instruction. The District is redeploying 9 staff members from Staples High School to the middle school who will assist with coverage needs.

The decision to keep Staples High School in a full remote model of instruction through Thanksgiving was not made lightly. In my communication to you Wednesday evening about the initial move to two days of remote instruction at Staples, 27 staff members were in some period of quarantine. As of the time I am writing to you this afternoon, that number has risen to 44. In addition, nearly 350 students have been asked to quarantine as well. The significant increase in positive COVID-19 cases at Staples, and associated quarantines, this past week has made it impossible for us to maintain in-person instruction at the high school.

Despite the District's issues with quarantining staff, I believe the decisions outlined above will serve our middle school and high school students best at this time. The high school students will have access to instruction from their teachers through remote means, and the period of separation may assist with slowing down the number of positive cases in the building. The middle school students will regain critical access to in-person learning and maintain productive contact with their teachers, even those in quarantine, because of our redeployment of high school personnel. I reiterate that my goal is to have all students in school as much as possible, so this approach to addressing the short-term needs of both secondary schools is the best one towards achieving that goal after Thanksgiving.

In the weeks ahead it is critical that all of our students, staff and families do everything possible to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The issues we have faced this week are not the result of significant spread within the walls of our schools. In fact, the schools, in many ways, are some of the safest locations for your children. However, a

significant rise in community transmission negates the mitigation measures in our schools and thus drastically increases possible spread in our classrooms.

Mr. Thomas, Principal of Staples High School, Ms. Szabo, Principal of Coleytown Middle School, and Dr. Rosen, Principal of Bedford Middle School, will send additional information to their students, families, and staff about plans for the days ahead. In the meantime, I ask that students and families at all of our schools maintain vigilance with adherence to mitigation measures that will ultimately keep us all safe.

Sincerely,

Thomas Scarice

Superintendent