

August 20, 2020

Dear Members of the ECTS Community,

Early in the week of August 10, 2020, The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PDOH) co-released **guidance** on instructional delivery models to be used based on county-specific data indicating levels of COVID-19 throughout Pennsylvania. I emphasize that the guidance provides **recommendations** and is NOT a binding directive.

The original PDE and PDOH guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/ReopeningPreKto12/Pages/DeterminingInstructionalModels.aspx>

The guidance, in the form of a chart, is reproduced as follows:

Level of Community Transmission in the County	Incidence Rate per 100,000 Residents (Most Recent 7 Days)	AND/OR	PCR Percent Positivity (Most Recent 7 Days)	Recommended Instructional Models
Low	<10	AND	<5%	Full in-person Model OR Blended Learning Model
Moderate	10 to <100	OR	5% to <10%	Blended Learning Model OR Full Remote Learning Model
Substantial	≥100	OR	≥10%	Full Remote Learning Model

At approximately the same time the PDE and PDOH guidance was published, an official source of data titled the “COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard” was published that is intended to be used in conjunction with the guidance noted above.

The COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard provides COVID-19-related data for each county in the Commonwealth, is updated regularly, and can be accessed at:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>

The dashboard data are provided on a weekly basis, and the guidance recommends looking at two weeks of data prior to making decisions about the selection of an instructional delivery model. **AT THIS TIME**, Erie County, PA is clearly in the “**MODERATE**” category of COVID-19 transmission that calls for implementation of a “Blended Learning Model” OR a “Full Remote Learning Model,” But NOT A “FULL IN-PERSON LEARNING MODEL.”

In terms of planning for, and managing, the educational and work aspects of ECTS Community lives, it is not practical for us to wait until we get closer to the start of school to see what happens in the data. Accordingly, the ECTS is, with this message, officially taking the following position:

The ECTS will begin the 2020/2021 Academic Year as scheduled on Tuesday, August 25th, 2020, on the A/B schedule approved by our Joint Operating Committee – Our A/B schedule is posted on the ECTS website.

All ECTS employees will report to work and be fully prepared to be in, and working in, our buildings Monday through Friday of each week unless notified by the Director of a change in work expectations.

All ECTS students will be on a Hybrid, also known as, an “A” / “B” schedule based on their academic programs. Selected academic programs will meet on “A” days while the remainder of academic programs will meet on “B” days. The Hybrid, or A/B, schedule is posted separately on the ECTS website and will inform all in our community of program meeting days.

All students attending any academic program at the ECTS will be required to meet on campus on their assigned meeting days AND to participate in online activities on all other days they are not meeting at the ECTS. Participation in all meeting days and completion of all assignments is required, whether those assignments are provided via in-person or online instruction, all student work and assignments will be graded, and reporting of attendance to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will be completed in accordance with policy and public law.

For instructions regarding bussing and transportation to/from the ECTS, parents and students should contact their respective School Districts.

Given the finite nature of our physical and instructional resources, and the “hands-on” nature of technical education, the ECTS is NOT able to offer a purely online instructional delivery format without exception.

We continue to emphasize all aspects of practicing health and safety measures at the ECTS. Our preparations for the new school year and the A/B schedule are complete and we are fully in compliance with all aspects of PDE, PDOH, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control safety and health protocols. Many, but not all, of our health and safety measures include the following:

1. Reducing the occupancy rate of our building by 50% of the student headcount,
2. Providing all employees with recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE),
3. Requiring students to bring with them PPE every day and to wear that PPE in accordance with our safety protocol,
4. Requiring all visitors to the school building to be wearing PPE at all times,
5. Ensuring social distancing,
6. Establishing one-way traffic flow patterns in hallways,
7. Minimizing student movements within the school building,
8. Staggering all students movements,
9. Separating student desks and work stations in accordance with PDE/CDC guidelines,
10. Requiring the use of masks in all common spaces and when entering/leaving the building,
11. Developing appropriate policy and protocol for such things as cleaning and sanitizing surfaces, deep cleaning, cleaning after potential exposure, etc.
12. Recommending the regular washing of hands at regular intervals,
13. Suspending use of large group gathering areas such as the cafeteria,
14. Suspending large group functions such as snacks/”grab and go”, etc.

15. Adjusting the configuration of our Nursing station to provide separation of injury vs. COVID-19 related needs.
16. Staggering the loading and unloading of buses.

We have more than adequate sanitization and disinfecting cleaning supplies and we have more than adequate Personal Protective Equipment for our employees.

Finally, please expect that there will be inconveniences and, likely, disruptions due to COVID-19 during our upcoming academic year. Please be prepared as well for changes in the instructional delivery model itself as conditions in Erie County, PA may require.

As members of our ECTS community, you can expect that the Hybrid or A/B schedule will remain in effect throughout the first academic quarter in order to maintain predictability, planning, and continuity of operations. Following the first academic quarter, implementation of the Hybrid or A/B schedule will be reevaluated based on the entirety of the next academic quarter and then on academic quarters thereafter. In the event that we are required to adopt a purely online instructional delivery model by our public health authorities, you can expect that we will communicate changes to you via email and our emergency mass notification system as quickly as details are confirmed.

Please consider this message as a definitive set of instructions for the beginning our 2020/2021 Academic Year.

Respectfully,

H. Fred Walker, Ph.D.
Director,
Erie County Technical School