

Requirements for School Closure

What do the requirements mean and how do we make the determination?

Quakertown Community School District
12/3/20



School Closures

New Guidance = Attestation and New Requirements

On November 23, 2020, PDE released new [Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools Following Identification of a Case\(s\) of COVID-19](#).

By **Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health**, dated November 23, 2020, public PreK-12 school entities in counties with two consecutive weeks of substantial transmission must attest to complying to the following to continue offering any in-person instruction:

- The [Updated Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings](#), including necessary exceptions and [associated guidance](#), and
- The [Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools Following Identification of a Case\(s\) of COVID-19](#).

NOTE: QCSD submitted our Attestation form by the November 30, 2020 deadline to allow us to continue to provide in-person instruction after the Thanksgiving Break.



Recommendations for Small (<500 students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19

Applies to the Sixth Grade Center, all elementary schools, and the Academy

Recommendations for Small (<500 Students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19			
Level of Community Transmission in the county	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 1 student or 1 staff	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 2-4 students/staff in same school building	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 5+ students/staff in same school building
Substantial†	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Clean area(s) where case spent time• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Close school(s) for 3-7 days*• Clean area(s) where cases spent time• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Close school(s) for 14 days*• Clean entire school• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine

*If case investigations, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfecting can be accomplished in a faster time frame, the length of closure time may be shortened.

†DOH and PDE recommend a Full Remote Learning Model for all schools in counties with substantial level of community transmission. Schools that choose to pursue in-person instruction or other models in which school buildings are utilized by students and/or staff should follow the recommendations here.



Recommendations for Medium (500–900 students) Pre–K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID–19

Applies to Strayer Middle School

Recommendations for Medium (500-900 Students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19			
Level of Community Transmission in the county	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 1-3 students or staff	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 4-6 students/staff in same school building	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 7+ students/staff in same school building
Substantial†	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Clean area(s) where case spent time• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Close school(s) for 3-7 days*• Clean area(s) where cases spent time• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Close school(s) for 14 days*• Clean entire school• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine

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Recommendations for Large (>900 students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19

Applies to the High School

Recommendations for Large (>900 Students) Pre-K to 12 School Buildings Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19			
Level of Community Transmission in the county	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 1-5 students or staff	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 6-10 students/staff in same school building	Number of Cases of COVID-19 Within a Rolling 14-day period 11+ students/staff in same school building
Substantial†	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Clean area(s) where case spent time• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Close school(s) for 3-7 days*• Clean area(s) where cases spent time• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School should consider altering schedule to significantly decrease number of students on site• Close school(s) for 14 days*• Clean entire school• Public health staff will direct close contacts to quarantine

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FAQ on How to Count Cases

- Rolling 14 day period, begins from symptom onset of the first case identified in the school (after December 1, 2020 for QCSD since we were closed for 5 days for the Thanksgiving break)
- A case in a school setting would include any confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 **when the individual was physically present in the school setting during the infectious period**, including but not limited to, instruction, work, sports, or extracurricular activities. The definition does not include individuals who were not physically present - virtual, quarantined, or absent, for example.
- The rolling 14-days **resets after a school closes for cases**. For instance, if a school has 9 cases, closes for 3 days for cleaning, etc. – when the students come back to school, the 14 days will not start again until there is another case.
- **Important Note:** Number of cases qualifying for counting might or might not be the same as building notifications issued for transparency



* The Importance of the Asterisk

* If case investigations, contact tracing, and cleaning and disinfecting can be accomplished in a faster time frame, the length of closure time can be shortened

What does this mean from a practical standpoint?



Attestation Part 1: Contact Tracing

When notified of a positive case, our nurses do case investigation to support the Bucks County DOH contact tracing process:

- Last day in school/work and days attended
- Where there might be close contacts:
 - Classrooms - seating charts and room sign in sheets
 - Buses - seating charts
 - Extracurricular activities - coach or adviser data
- Possible close contacts get our close contact letter and our nurses share the information with the Bucks County DOH for contact tracing
- **NOTE:** The return to 5 days a week instruction greatly increased the number of close contacts identified since students are not 6 feet apart in many/most secondary classrooms.



Asterisk Impact – Contact Tracing

In most cases, our district nurses complete Case Investigation and identification of close contacts to exclude from live school within 24 hours. Their case reports are invaluable to the Bucks County Department of Health in completing contact tracing quickly.

So in most cases, we **will not** need to close a school to provide time for “within school” contact tracing, even though Bucks County DOH may not have officially completed the process. Bucks County DOH has also prioritized contact tracing for school related cases within their office to support schools in minimizing closures.

Attestation Part 2: Cleaning/Disinfecting Process When the Closure Threshold is Reached



Per [CDC](#) and [PA DOH](#):

“Schools should close off all areas used by a case and not use those areas again until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#). This may include a classroom, common areas used by the case such as lunchrooms and restrooms, gyms and locker rooms, school transportation options like a bus or van, and in some cases, the entire school building. Students should not be present when disinfectants are being used...”

“To protect the health of janitorial and cleaning staff, schools should wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.”



Asterisk Impact – Cleaning/Disinfecting

- Impact is highly dependent on which building, number of cases, and scope of areas that need to be cleaned and disinfected
 - Small building, limited areas = limited impact
 - Large building, many areas = greater impact
- Timing is also important - hitting the closure threshold on a Monday will have more impact than hitting the closure threshold on a Friday
- Cascading impact on cleaning (not disinfecting) in other school buildings is expected
- SSC and QCSD Facilities are developing detailed plans for various cleaning/disinfecting scenarios to maximize efficiency and minimize the length of closures

So in most cases, a short term closure (one day) **will** be needed to meet the cleaning/disinfecting requirements, subject to the variables noted.