

Determining Instructional Models During the COVID-19 Pandemic Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools

By Senator Scavella

PEN ARGYL - Following a Senate workshop discussion last month that highlighted the need for additional guidance on safely re-opening school buildings, the Department of Education recently announced new recommendations for instructional models for the 2020-21 school year.

Decisions on the operation of schools during the pandemic remain in the hands of local school boards.

Topics: Instructional Model Definitions | Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools in Determining Instructional Models | Transitioning Between Instructional Models

In response to school leaders' need for additional guidance as to the risk of COVID-19 transmission in their communities, the Departments of Health and Education are providing recommendations to Pre-K to 12 schools for use when making decisions related to the instructional models used during the 2020-21 school year.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Guidance and Resources for Pre-K to 12 Schools contains additional information related to the safe reopening of schools for the 2020-21 school year. Additional guidance to assist school leaders when a case of COVID-19 is identified at a school is forthcoming.

It is important to note that a safe return to in-person instruction will look different across every school, district, and county depending on a variety of factors, one of which is the spread of COVID-19. School entity decisions on instructional models require a great deal of consideration of local factors including size of the school entity, classroom size, school resources, proportion of staff and students with special needs and underlying health conditions, and the ability to accommodate remote learning with equal access for all students.

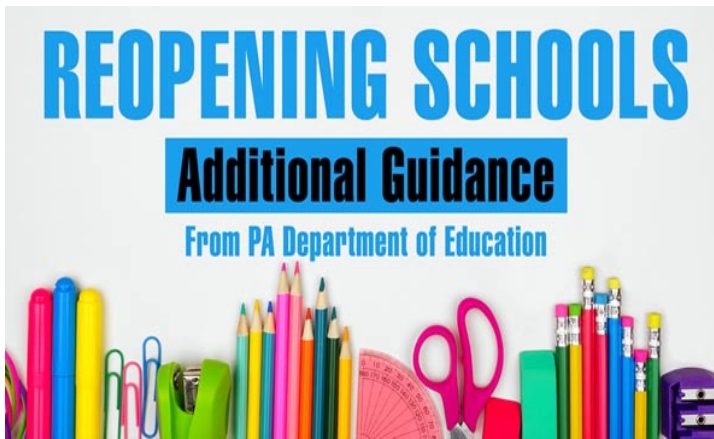
The recommendations contained in this guidance rely on two standard public health metrics: incidence rate and the percent positivity of diagnostic testing. These metrics are available for every county in Pennsylvania on the COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard.

Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools in Determining Instructional Models

This chart below, using measurements from the White House Coronavirus Task Force, identifies thresholds representing low, moderate, or substantial community transmission of COVID-19, and corresponding instructional models recommended by the Departments of Health and Education.

For ease of use, once per week, the Department of Education will publish a list identifying the level of community transmission in each county over the most recent 7-day reporting period. This list is available on this page in the section called: Level of Community Transmission Table.

For all the information go to <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance>.



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Air, Water, and Heat

Heat travels in 3 ways; convection, conduction, and radiation. That pretty much sums up the energy business. Why then are there so many differing opinions about the best way to insulate a house? And why are there so many problems with mold and condensation and wood rotting in newer homes? Moisture is the cause of these problems and that is another piece to the puzzle.

Water can be present in liquid or vapor form and it can change from one to the other just by a temperature change. When it happens on the grass at night it forms dew. When it happens in your crawl space or attic, it becomes moldy if the temperature is right.

Three of the main items to consider when building or fixing a home are air, water and heat. If you can change the temperature of the inside air and keep in the house you are way ahead of the game. A small amount of fresh air is needed for healthy living but it is so small that even the tightest homes rarely need to add ventilation when they are measured after construction. Moisture is the most misunderstood factor of the construction industry and the way most contractors avoid problems is to allow a hundred times more ventilation than is necessary. This way any moisture created inside is washed away to the exterior through attic ventilation. Along with that moisture goes most of the heating or cooling energy too. The majority of moisture generated inside a home is generated in the bathroom and proper ventilation there will prevent any problems all the way to the attic. I have proven this dozens of times in energy retrofit work.

Insulating an attic or a vaulted ceiling can be done with spray foam or cellulose insulation and no ventilation is needed under the roof. As a matter of fact, if the roof is insulated properly, no ventilation is ALLOWED under the roof sheathing. This will not 'bake' the shingles either. That is because radiation is the medium used to make most attics so hot and having insulation directly below the roof will either absorb or reflect that radiation and prevent it from reaching the inside. The temperature of the shingles does not even rise 10° above what it would otherwise be.

Radiant barrier also reflects the radiation but it does not prevent convection from taking that heat and circulating it around the attic so I call radiant barrier for attics snake oil. Its efficiency drops drastically after a month or two. In theory it works, but not in practice.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

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