



RASD COVID UPDATE  
11-09-2020

The following information was shared with the Ridgway Area School District by the Pennsylvania Department of Education on behalf of the PA Department of Health (DOH) today during a conference call with Elk County superintendents. When the PA Department of Health is going to categorize a county in the “substantial” community spread, the superintendents in the county are asked to attend a meeting. In Pennsylvania, 38 counties are currently in "substantial spread". Elk County has an increased incident rate (IR) and positivity rate (PR) for the previous 7 days (10-30-2020 through 11-06-2020).

Elk, Jefferson, and Juniata Counties participated in the call. PDE facilitated the call. PA DOH was unavailable due to public health demands. The PA DOH data was presented by PDE. Elk County's Incident Rate (IR) is 232/100,000 (this is a scaled metric). Elk Positivity Rate (PR) was 8.4%. The PA DOH attributes 72% of the cases in Elk County to 2 or more events/locations (congregate spread) and 28% of the cases are community spread, which means there is no known origin. This is an important metric to monitor. Elk County age range attribution for cases in the last 7 days: age 65+ make up 35% of the cases; ages 25-64 make up 45% of the cases; ages 19-24 make up 9 %; ages 10-18 make up 10%; and ages 10 and below there was not enough data.

Given this data for the past 7-days, PDE recommends for the current week that schools maintain the instructional model per "moderate level" guidance. RASD's hybrid model includes R-Learning and Elker Academy. When Elk County was first placed in "substantial" for the week of 10-23-2020 through 10-30-2020, RASD reopened R-Learning to parents/guardians. At this point and as previously stated RASD's hybrid model is voluntary virtual enrollment in R-Learning. RASD will maintain open enrollment in R-Learning based on parent preference which will likely be driven by county and school district statistics and family/community spread.

For example, families with loved ones who have compromised immune systems may not want to risk a school age child bringing COVID 19 home to a loved one. Families who work in health care are also choosing R-Learning because they do not want to risk bringing COVID 19 into their home and their children exposing classmates and teachers when they come to school. These represent a few of our family's thoughtful circumstance. The RASD staff truly appreciates the thoughtfulness that parents are using to making their decisions.

If Elk is in "substantial" for 11-06 through 11-13 the District will receive an email between Friday and Sunday from PDE/PA DOH. PDE will likely recommend full remote learning, this is a recommendation not an order. If there are significant events in the county, PA DOH can "take more significant action and be directive about full remote learning". PDE is currently watching differences in cases among younger and older age ranges and this may inform future decisions at the state level.

In addition to PDE and PA DOH statistics, RASD is also committed to monitoring local statistics in our school district's zip code. The District uses the knowledge and resources from local providers and PA Department of Health's county nurse. Ridgway's statistics have been stable at 10 cases per the last 7 days since 11/5/2020, this represents a decrease from 11/4 when there were 13 active cases in the 7-day window. At this time, there is only one active student/staff positive case to our knowledge (as of 11/9/2020). RASD's school nurses monitor all school COVID statistics and report out daily. Also the daily attendance rates across the District are being monitored.

RASD has experienced site based COVID cases (RMHS), quarantining, managing athletics in a pandemic, 1 transition to full remote learning, and the "substantial" categorization of county spread. RASD will begin convening a CORE pandemic team meeting on a weekly basis to review data and discuss instructional model implementation. Updates to the District's instructional model will be provided to staff on Thursday afternoons via email and to the families on Thursday evening via a phone/text notification. In the event that a significant county level shift in the statistics occur or the COVID 19 cases become unstable and the District receives a directive from PA DOH; staff, parents and the community will be notified more immediately of the change in instruction. RASD is hopeful that we can stop the spread of COVID 19 in our community by wearing a face covering, maintaining a social distance of at least 6ft, washing/sanitizing hands, avoiding gatherings, and staying home if you are sick. Together we can keep our community healthy and our schools open.