



January 14, 2021

Dear RASD Families,

The pandemic core team met this morning at 8 am to review data and to make a determination regarding the instructional model for the week of January 18. Based on the team’s review of data, which you will find below, the Ridgway Area School District will resume in person instruction beginning January 18, 2021, for all k-12 students. Please remember, Friday, January 22, 2021, is an Act 80 day for teachers. There is no school for students (in person or remote).

**Survey Data:** There were 406 respondents to the District’s survey. Response rates included: 70% for FSG, 78% for RMS, and 86% for RHS.

|            | <b>In Person Instruction</b> | <b>R-Learning (Full Remote)</b> | <b>Elker Academy</b> |
|------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>FSG</b> | 75.5% (225 students)         | 7.38% (22 students)             | 1.01% (3 students)   |
| <b>RMS</b> | 60.42% (145 students)        | 9.58% (23 students)             | .42% (1 student)     |
| <b>RHS</b> | 55.47% (137 students)        | 10.12% (25 students)            | .81% (2 students)    |

Based upon responses received for K-12 students: 9.43% of our students (38) experienced a close contact with a positive case; 4.94% of our students (20) experienced COVID 19 symptoms; 2.22% of our students (9) tested positive for COVID 19; and 5.93% of our students (24) had a household family member test positive for COVID 19. This data reflected exposure between December 28-January 13.

**Zip Code Data: Positivity Rate & Incident Rate for Elk County (last 7 days)** <https://mainlinemama.com/pa-covid-19-school-reopening-school-district-zip-code-dashboard/> As a point of comparison, on December 4, 2020, Ridgway’s positivity rate was 29.82% and the incident rate was 269.07/100,000. Between Christmas and January 4, Ridgway was hitting positivity rates above 50% for several consecutive days.

| <b>01-13-2021</b>  | <b>Positivity Rate</b> | <b>Incident Rate</b> | <b># of positives</b> |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Ridgway</b>     | 35%                    | 332/100,000          | 21/39                 |
| <b>Brockport</b>   | -33%                   | 67.62/100,000        | -1/4                  |
| <b>Johnsonburg</b> | 20%                    | 96.96/100,000        | 3/12                  |
| <b>Wilcox</b>      | 0%                     | 0                    | 0                     |
| <b>St. Mary’s</b>  | 34.52%                 | 224.72/100,000       | 29/55                 |
| <b>Kersey</b>      | 34.78%                 | 217.81/100,000       | 8/15                  |

**County Data: (PA Early Warning Dashboard – data comparison between the current 7-day window and the previous 7-day window:** <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Monitoring-Dashboard.aspx>

| <b>Current 7-day window<br/>Jan 1-Jan 7, 2021)</b> | <b>Positivity Rate</b> | <b>Incident Rate</b> | <b>Differences in<br/>Confirmed Positives</b> |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Elk</b>   | 16.7%                  | 310.9/100,000        | -16   |
| <b>PA</b>  | 14.4%                  | 330.6/100,000        | +1034   |

**Anecdotal:** There is no evidence of in school transmission of COVID 19 from student to teacher or teacher to student in the RASD. All IU 9 school districts are currently in person for instruction, with the exception of Ridgway and St. Mary’s. St. Mary’s Area SD plans to return to in person instruction on January 19, 2021.

RASD’s decision to return to in person instruction was made with a clear understanding of the level of community spread; mindfulness of the health, safety and welfare of our students and staff; and an awareness of the Secretary of Health’s recommendation for elementary students to return to in-person learning.

Our educators are very concerned about health and safety as it relates to themselves or students contracting COVID 19. Educators and parents are concerned about bouncing back and forth in the event that COVID 19 cases occur in school. Administrators are concerned about having enough staff to teach in person, given the ongoing level of community spread. As a District we are required to follow the attestation guidelines. Two-four cases of COVID 19 in a school will result in a building transitioning to full remote learning for a period of time.

To help everyone feel safe, to avoid another school closure, and to ensure the staff to support in person instruction, we need your help. **Over the course of the next couple of weeks, until the staff can be fully vaccinated and the level of community spread declines, PLEASE follow the public health recommendations that are known to mitigate the spread of COVID 19: wear a face covering, maintain a social distance, avoid gatherings, and wash/sanitize your hands.** If your child is not feeling well, has been exposed to someone who is positive for COVID 19, or is positive themselves for COVID 19 please keep them home and call the nurse.

**Instructional Expectations:** Next week the District will get students into school, accounted for and re-acclimated to their schedules and routines. Some students being in person and others choosing to be fully remote (R-Learning). Everyone will need to be patient with each other as this transition is made. Some students managed remote learning better than others. Staff may provide limited new instruction or additional remediation support next week because it is the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> nine week grading period. Teachers will give students time and support to make up any missing assignments from remote learning. Students must put forth the effort in completing assignments. Students who do not complete assignments will receive the grades they earn.

**Technology:** ALL Students returning from full remote learning to in person instruction on Monday, January 18, are expected to return all District technology and adapters to their homeroom teachers (FSG/RMS) or their 1<sup>st</sup> period class (RHS).

**Health and Safety Reminders:** Everyone has a personal responsibility to keep each other safe and healthy. These health and safety precautions were in place prior to transitioning to full remote learning. These worked well for us. We anticipate they will continue to mitigate the spread of COVID 19 in the school setting.

1. Wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times. If you are wearing a face shield, there must be a foam piece at the top between the shield and your forehead. The shield must cover your face completely, extending below the chin. Half shields that cover only the nose and mouth are no longer recommended or acceptable. If you need a face covering or shield, they are available at school.
2. If you have COVID 19 symptoms, if you are a close contact of a positive case, or if you test positive, stay home and contact the school nurse: FSG – Luann Dybowski at 814-776-2176 OR RMHS – Tabitha Muth at 814-773-3164
3. If you travel, you are required to obtain a rapid negative test within two days prior to returning to Pennsylvania. Students should submit their negative test results to the school nurses upon their return to school. If you are unable to produce a negative rapid test result prior to returning to work/school, you will be required to quarantine for 14 days.
4. Maintain 6ft of social distances at all times. Note: a close contact means you were within 6ft of a person with COVID 19 symptoms or a person positive for COVID 19 for 15 minutes or more; if you are excluded as a close contact the District will be using the 14-day quarantine period (not 10 days).
5. Avoid gathering.
6. Wash and sanitize your hands often.

Together WE can mitigate the spread of COVID 19 in our school and community. WE can keep our school open for in-person instruction. WE appreciate everyone's efforts! If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at [mcmahonheather@rasd.us](mailto:mcmahonheather@rasd.us). Stay safe ELKERS!

Sincerely,  
Heather McMahon-Vargas  
RASD Superintendent