



400 North Third Street
P.O. Box 1724
Harrisburg, PA 17105-1724

(717) 255-7000 • (800) 944-PSEA (7732)
Fax: (717) 255-7128 • (717) 255-7124
www.psea.org

Richard W. Askey, *President*
Aaron F. Chapin, *Vice President*
Jeffrey D. Ney, *Treasurer*
James G. Vaughan, *Executive Director*

July 16, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Room 225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg PA, 17120

The Honorable Pedro Rivera
Secretary of Education
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Tenth Floor, 333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Rivera:

In light of the recent executive order imposing additional statewide COVID-19 mitigation activities, it is important to consider how this, and the continued spread of the coronavirus, will impact the reopening of Pennsylvania's public schools and the health and safety of the commonwealth's students and the educators and support professionals who teach and serve them.

There is absolutely no doubt that the educators and support professionals I am so proud to represent want to return to school and see their students in person. And no one knows better than educators how important it is to provide students with the highest quality learning experiences and supports.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of Pennsylvania educators and parents are concerned that reopening schools for in-person instruction poses significant health risks that, in the current environment, may be impossible to completely prevent. The fact is that Pennsylvania's COVID-19 cases continue to increase, and I commend you on your executive order, which is aimed at slowing the spread of the virus.

Considering the mitigation efforts included in your order, it is now more important than ever to ensure that every public school entity's reopening plan includes essential activities and protocols aimed at reducing health risks. These include the proper sanitation of facilities, social distancing of no less than six feet, and the use of face coverings. I must underscore that, to reduce health risks, these activities and protocols must be included in every school reopening plan.

It is also extremely important for Pennsylvania's public schools to plan for the distinct possibility that further increases in COVID-19 cases will make it impossible to safely reopen Pennsylvania's schools for in-person instruction.

The PSEA Mission

We are members who promote, protect, and advocate for our schools, students, and professions.

Affiliated with the National Education Association

In public education, planning is paramount to providing the very best instruction for our students.

That is why it is absolutely essential that every public school entity in Pennsylvania is prepared to deliver online instruction. School entities that have not already developed plans for online instruction must immediately create them. So, I ask that you use your executive authority to direct school entities to work with their local education associations and develop thorough, complete, and well-reasoned online instruction models.

Your leadership during the COVID-19 emergency has been commendable, because you have acted to put the health and safety of Pennsylvanians first and do everything possible to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Considering the growing health risks that this novel virus poses for Pennsylvania's students, educators, and their families, requiring planning for the delivery of online instruction in our public schools is a natural and essential next step in your mitigation efforts.

That is why I urge you to take this important step. As always, PSEA's members are eager to work with you to ensure the health and safety of our public schools and everyone in them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Askey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rich Askey
President