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**Greater Nanticoke Area ready for first day
Temperature scanners, distance markers, sanitizer all at the ready**
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Floor markings of “footprints” six feet apart, hi-tech temperature scanners before heading to homeroom, pedal-powered sanitizer stations, drinking fountains wrapped in green plastic, desks converted to individual dining tables — Greater Nanticoke Area students will face a very different type of school Monday.

Even the first lessons will be shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The first day of school we’ll be teaching hygiene,” Superintendent Ron Grevera said during a tour of the schools to show off numerous preparations to keep students and staff safe as the district launches its hybrid system Monday, with half the students in person and half learning live online. “Washing hands, maintaining distance, even the proper way to remove a mask.”

That would be by grabbing the loops on the side, not the mask itself, he demonstrated with his own district-branded face mask with a logo surrounded by the words “Trojan Strong.”

Floors at the entrances have markings — images of footprints in the high school — six feet apart, in lines the students will form before staring into high-tech scanners that check body temperature and give a verbal green light by announcing “temperature normal.”

Desks in all the rooms are spread six feet apart. The high school cafeteria tables are marked with tape to remind students no more than two to a table. In the elementary grades, spare desks removed from the classrooms are set up as individual tables in the gyms for meals.

Offices and the cafeteria have Plexiglas screens between staff and visitors. The wrapped water fountains have been replaced with water coolers in the hallways. And Grevera’s tour included one of two stock rooms crammed with boxes of cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer and extra face masks.

Greater Nanticoke Area will be the second Luzerne County School District to hold a first day of school with at least some students in the classrooms. Dallas launched in hybrid mode Wednesday. Hanover Area will also have the first day of school Monday, but dropped earlier plans to use a hybrid system and will begin with all students learning remotely.

The Greater Nanticoke Area hybrid system splits students into group A and Group B, with Group A in school Monday and Tuesday while group B learns live at home online. The groups switch Thursday and Friday, with all students learning at home Wednesday.

Like many districts across the county and the country, Greater Nanticoke is opening without enough Chromebook computers thanks to the extraordinary high demand caused by the pandemic. He said about 1,300 more are needed before the district has one for every student, and he doesn’t expect them to come in until about mid October.

Still, Grevera is confident all the steps that could be taken have been taken.

“If we can’t do this here,” he said at the end of the tour, “I don’t think you can do school anywhere.”