EWRSD Community Update - August 26, 2020

Dear EWRSD Community:

I hope this communication finds you and your families in good health. This update serves as a follow up to the Board of Education meeting that took place on Monday, August 24, 2020. During the meeting, I asked the Board to approve an addendum to the EWRSD Restart and Recovery Plan that was originally approved on August 3, 2020. The addendum included the following recommendation for the 2020-21 school year:

- Begin remotely for all students on Wednesday, September 9, 2020

The presentation from the meeting on August 24, 2020 can be found here.

The information/rationale to support the recommendation of the addendum was based on the following:

As indicated in the August 17, 2020 Community Update regarding the restart of the 2020-21 school year, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 175 on August 13, 2020. Among other things, Executive Order 175 permits school districts to reopen entirely remotely in September, if they believe there are some hurdles to safely open for in-person at that time. This is a change to the guidance originally included in the NJDOE Road Back plan that was released on June 26, 2020. Executive Order 175 indicates that districts that begin “all remote” must make good faith efforts and “actively strive to address any deficiencies” to resume in-person instruction, and must resume partial or full-time in-person instruction at some point during the fall of 2020. Although we believe the EWRSD has developed a solid and thoughtful framework to support Hybrid-In Person and All Remote options for the fall, this recent Executive Order served as a reminder that we must continually assess the implementation of the plan. It is critical to ensure the necessary health and safety precautions for in-person instruction are in place on the first day of school.

The EWRSD has continued to engage in the process of reviewing the following areas which may possibly impact in-person instruction in September 2020:

- Staff Accommodations: As we address requests from members of our staff who may need to work from home, due to medical conditions that place them at higher risk for COVID-19, we need to ensure that we have adequate staff present in buildings to monitor students and provide in-person instruction.
- HVAC Recommendations: We are awaiting recommendations from an audit of the district’s air ventilation equipment and filtration system.
PPE: Although we have acquired and stockpiled the majority of needed PPE items such as cleaning supplies/equipment, masks, thermometers, and signage, we need to ensure that all required materials are in the district as originally scheduled.

HVAC Recommendations Update (Critical Area of Operations #2 - Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms):

On Friday, August 21, the district received preliminary recommendations from the HVAC - Ventilation and Filtration Analysis that is being completed by M&E Engineers. The recommendations for all EWRSD schools are as follows, and are based on the NJDOE Road Back and ASHRAE COVID-19 Guidance for Building Readiness:

- **Air Handler and Rooftop Units** (approximately 150): Replace all MERV 7 filters with MERV 13/14 filters.
- **Unit Ventilators** (approximately 185): Replace all MERV 8 filters with MERV 13/14 filters.
  - As these Unit Ventilation units cannot currently accept MERV 13/14 filters, the classroom should be provided with portable, electric HEPA\UV machines.

Revised Reopening Dates for In-Person and Remote Instruction:

In an effort to provide adequate time to obtain and appropriately install the HVAC filters/equipment indicated above, the EWRSD will delay the date to safely begin in-person instruction for the 2020-21 school year.

- The 2020-21 school year will begin with remote instruction for all students on Wednesday, September 9, 2020.
- In-person instruction for students will begin on Monday, November 9, 2020.

In addition, I have included some updates related to the transition to the 2020-21 school year. Some of these items were addressed during the August 24, 2020 BOE meeting:

- **Kidcare Support Centers**: Since we will begin the year with all remote learning, we recognize this may create a burden for working families. Therefore, we are exploring the possibility of offering a Kidcare Support Center. The Kidcare Support Center will have 3 or 5-day options available from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. each day for our students in grades K-8. We will provide adult supervision for students to complete their remote learning at an affordable price for families. There will be no transportation provided by
the district to the Kidcare Support Center. Students must be dropped off and picked up by a parent. Bagged lunch will be available. In an effort to gauge interest, we will send a brief survey to parents this week.

- **Parent Supports:** We recognize some of the challenges that parents will encounter when navigating the transition to a remote learning environment. Supports for families will be offered at both the school and district level. Information will be forthcoming.

- **Remote Learning Schedules:** During all remote learning from September 9 - November 9, students will follow full day schedules. Schools will send all remote learning schedules to families this week.

- **Special Education:** As previously stated, we are committed to addressing the individual learning needs of students with IEPs. This includes exploring ways to transition in-person instruction for students with unique needs (ABA, Autism, and MD Programs) prior to November 9, 2020.

- **Wellness Newsletter:** Please click below to review the district’s Wellness Newsletter:
  
  - EWRSD Wellness Newsletter - English
  - EWRSD Wellness Newsletter - Spanish

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mark Daniels
Superintendent of Schools