August 11, 2020

RE: Return to School Plan 2020

Dear APPS Staff and Families,

Throughout the pandemic, science and data have continued to inform our decisions. We rely on the facts presented by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Wayne County Department of Health, Human & Veterans Services as we coordinate, plan and prepare for returning students to school in the fall. In collaboration with the Elementary Focus Group and Secondary Focus Group, we have been strategic in our processes, always keeping the safety and well-being of our students and staff at the forefront, while also considering the information gleaned through parent and staff surveys. (summary attached)

After great care and thoughtful consideration, we have determined that the best course of action is to utilize the delayed in person instruction and begin the school year with the remote learning component of our Return to School Plan for the start of the 2020-21 school year.

Families can plan for the following:

- **In-person learning for the 2020-21 school year will temporarily begin in a remote learning environment, starting on Wednesday, September 2.** Our vision is to transition back to in-person learning as conditions allow. We will continue to monitor health protocols and data around COVID-19 transmissions in our local area. At this time, we anticipate being in the remote environment through October 2.

- Students already expressing interest in 100% Virtual Learning through Dr. John Tafelski’s Office will continue their online learning as planned beginning September 2. *(See additional info on page 2)*

**Fall Remote Learning**

As educators we know that learning in-person provides the best environment for teaching and learning. Beginning the school year with remote learning throughout September provides us with the safest way to begin this school year as we support the district’s goal of returning students to in-person learning. Students will begin the year with their assigned classroom teacher(s), who will provide daily, high quality instruction through a remote platform.

- Real time (synchronous) and independent (asynchronous) opportunities for learning will be available throughout the regularly scheduled day. Preliminary schedules for elementary and secondary students are attached.

- We want to be clear that strict guidelines will be put in place to ensure appropriate ranges for screen time use throughout the school day.

Parents should note that temporary remote learning in the fall will be more robust than the emergency measures put in place in March 2020. Remote learning enhancements for the 2020-21 school year include:

- Chromebook/devices provided to all students and teachers
- Google Classroom as a standardized learning platform
- Increased contact time with special education staff
- A more structured daily schedule
- Secondary students will receive feedback and grades
- Elementary students will receive timely, standards-based feedback
- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) will receive progress monitoring towards their IEP goals
- Increased mandatory expectations for learning, including content that will be graded, the administrative of formative and summative assessments
- Daily attendance will be taken
- All teachers received “Essentials in Remote Instruction” training last June

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Independent Virtual Learning – Placement by August 19

We recognize that some families may feel the need to re-evaluate their child's learning options given this new information. We are in this together, and we will do all we can to remain flexible, keeping the priority on our children. That said, we respectfully ask families to make their final decision regarding 100% Virtual Learning through APPS by Wednesday, August 19 by completing this form. This will help us determine staffing needs as we coordinate student and teacher schedules. If families have questions, we encourage them to please reach out to their school administrator for assistance.

Please note that if you requested information regarding 100% Virtual Learning through Dr. Tafelski, it does not mean that your child(ren) have been automatically enrolled in this option. Please be sure to complete the form mentioned above for each child you wish to have enrolled in 100% Virtual Learning by August 19. All currently enrolled APPS students without a completed Virtual Learning option form will be scheduled for remote learning/delayed in-person learning.

Please stay tuned...

As we consider classroom instruction, our special needs populations, transportation, food services, and maintenance operations, the high degree of complexity and the costs associated with mitigating health risks during the pandemic are extensive. There are still many unanswered questions as we continue to seek clarity from the Wayne County Department of Health, Human & Veterans Services on screening, testing, tracing and reporting protocols; await guidance regarding pupil accounting; and anticipate funding allocations that would help us more accurately align expenditures with available resources.

Through all of these challenges, I am proud to say that our Administrative Team, Elementary Focus Group and Secondary Focus Group have moved forward with great purpose and resolve to provide the best learning options for our students while mitigating health risks. We firmly believe that the thoughtful decision to delay in-person instruction is the right thing to do at this time to refine granular decisions and keep our school community safe.

We will continue to update staff and families with pertinent information, please watch email for further communications. Plans/information will also be posted on the district website at http://www.allenparkschools.com/. As we open our "virtual" doors to our schools on Wednesday, September 2, I know that we will be prepared to provide our students with a quality education where we can continue to build positive and supportive relationships with our students and our families. When we are ready to transition safely to in-person instruction, our students and teachers will have already built a solid foundation.

I personally want to thank you for the input that you have shared with us over the past few months, as it has truly helped us in our planning efforts. Special thanks to our parents, teachers and school leaders for serving on the Elementary and Secondary Focus Groups. I also want to thank you for the support and patience that you have afforded us as we navigate this new world. These are not easy times and we want to provide a quality and robust learning experience for our students with the safety of all at the forefront.

Sincerely,

Michael H. Darga
Superintendent of School

Attachments:
Staff & Parent Survey Summary Data
Preliminary Elementary/Secondary Remote Schedules