July 9, 2020

Rockdale School District 84 Families:

Illinois is currently in Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan created in response to the COVID19 pandemic. The Governor and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) released documentation (in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Public Health, IDPH) allowing for and encouraging the return to "in-person" schooling for the 2020-2021 school year. This document contains several mandates for how this can take place. The document, STARTING THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR, is posted on the Illinois State Board of Education website, https://www.isbe.net/. Rockdale School District 84 will utilize this guidance in any plans to reopen schools for the 2020-2021 School Year.

The following requirements were key in determining how to reopen school for "in-person" instruction:
A. Face coverings for all faculty, staff, and students.
B. Social distancing protocols must be followed.
C. Extensive cleaning must occur throughout the day and in the evening.
D. Large group gatherings of over 50 persons in a space are not allowed.
E. Daily health screening/temperature checks for students and staff.

There is no plan we could create that would be met with 100% support from all stakeholders. We are hopeful, however, that we can all work together to bring our students and staff back to school, and to do so as safely as possible. We know there will be questions as we go along, and we look forward to working with our school community to keep everyone informed and safe.

In order for the school to meet some of the most frequently mentioned challenges/concerns (social distancing requirements, to reduce the time spent wearing face coverings at school, to provide daily health checks/temperature screenings, and to have the time needed to extensively clean the building each day) it is necessary to reduce the number of students at our school each day and/or decrease the amount of time spent at school each day. Given that the State is strongly encouraging schools to return to some sort of in-person learning model, we feel our best option at this time is to proceed with a BLENDED LEARNING MODEL for the fall. In this letter, you will find information that further defines this model, which includes a combination of in-person and remote learning for all students.

This return to school plan will be presented to the Board of Education on July 15th. Additionally, please note, further changes in guidelines for COVID-19 pandemic response from ISBE and IDPH, or other governmental authorities may result in immediate changes to this plan.

The goal for instruction for the 2020-2021 school year is to meet students’ instructional needs regardless of the instructional setting that is dictated by the Restore Illinois Phase we are in. As a result of this goal, there are multiple opportunities for students to participate in whole-group, small group, and individual instruction. The district recognizes that all students will need review and support when school starts in August. Teachers in all areas, at all levels, are building in a time of review at the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

In order to meet Phase 4 guidelines for social distancing and to decrease the amount of time spent by students and staff wearing PPE daily (i.e. face coverings) learning for Rockdale students will be a blended approach of in-person and remote learning. **Full-time in-person attendance and full-time Remote Learning are not options that will be provided by Rockdale SD 84 at this time.** We understand that parents may not want to send their children to school and will choose to homeschool instead. Please contact the school and the Will County Regional Office of Education if you choose to home school your children: http://www.willroe.org/index.php/services/home-schooling/. Parents wishing to re-enroll their children at a later time will need to complete the registration process and placement in the appropriate grade/class subject to the District’s discretion.
Students in kindergarten through 8th grade will be split into two groups (A and B). Each group will represent roughly one-half of the students at school. Students in both groups will attend school on different days in-person two times per week from 8:20 a.m. through 12:20 p.m. and will spend the remainder of each week participating in remote learning at home. For the afternoon, all students will be expected to work on remote learning activities. All students will be provided devices to take home so students can access remote learning activities. The district will make every attempt to combine siblings so all members of one family attend on the same days each week. Students will eat breakfast at school, but will take a grab and go lunch home to be eaten at home.

The district understands that this is a lot of information, and you may have several questions already. Further specifics concerning the plan to return to school in August will be sent home following the Board of Education’s approval of the plan on July 15th. Families should expect further communication following the Board of Education meeting. Please understand, the plan to return to school in August is subject to change quickly as guidance from the State of Illinois continues to change. It is possible school will move to Full In-Person Learning or Full Remote-Learning. Lastly, the plan to return to school in August is not perfect. However, it is currently the district’s best attempt at providing high-quality instruction while keeping our students as safe as possible by following the guidelines we are provided.

As always we appreciate everything our families and community does to partner with Rockdale School District and we are positive that by working together we will provide the best educational experience for our students as possible given the constraints we have as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Please stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paul Schrik
Superintendent, Rockdale SD 84