

July 21, 2020

Dear Staff, Students, and Families,

The Exira-EHK Return-to-Learn options will be presented to the school board at the regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, July 21, 2020. This letter is to provide some information about those options as we prepare for the 20-21 school year. **Please read the entire letter, as I wanted to give you as many details as are available at this time.** The District Leadership Team is also finalizing a 20-21 COVID-19 Handbook, which will have additional details as we plan for this next school year. Our goal is to share the handbook before the end of July. There are still many details and logistics to work out, but this letter will provide you with a basic framework to help you begin planning for the fall.

DISCLAIMER: THE INFORMATION SHARED IN THIS LETTER COULD CHANGE BEFORE AUGUST 14TH. Nothing is set in stone. There are still discussions taking place at the state level between legislators and the Department of Education that could cause us to shift our plans. In addition, we continue to monitor best practice from local, state, and federal health experts. That said, we felt it important to provide you the information you need in as timely a manner as possible

Please review the information in this letter and consider your plans for your child(ren) for the beginning of the school year.

Before we share our Return-to Learn options, please know that we are hopeful that students will be back in our buildings this fall. Face-to-face instruction is our ultimate goal. We recognize the academic, social, and emotional impact being away from school has on our students. We also realize the difficulties placed on families when we are not physically present in our buildings. As we move closer to our August 14 school start date, we will continue to review all local data to make the best decisions for our teachers, students, and families.

Our plan consists of three possible options. I will first describe each option and then provide information on mitigation efforts, personal protective equipment, meals, and transportation. I recognize this information will raise many questions and would ask that you please communicate your questions with us here at school, so we can address them in a timely and respectful manner.

Option 1: Full Attendance with Family Choice

If school were to start tomorrow, this is the plan we would utilize. I will send a calendar with just August and September on it as this will be the only changes. Our goal would be to be able to go to full 5 days the week of September 14th.

In this option, we plan to bring all kids back to school but provide families with the choice to participate in-person or remotely. We will have students in attendance Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays with the expectation being that all students and staff will utilize facial coverings. We would use Wednesdays to deep clean the building, support those families choosing remote learning, support students who are not engaging or are struggling with the learning, and provide professional learning for staff. Some students may be asked to attend on Wednesdays, but they would be in one-on-one or very small group situations. All students not required to be in school will be learning remotely on Wednesdays.

This plan allows us to serve families who prefer in-person instruction and families that prefer to keep their children home. It is also very easy to shift from this plan to a five day per week plan if we find when we do not need the entire day Wednesday to carry out instruction, cleaning, or professional development.

Option 2: Hybrid Plan: After Governor Reynolds information and Proclamation hybrid plan will have to be reassessed.

Option 2A: In this option, we would be using a four/one format. Students in grades preschool through eighth grade would come to school 4 days a week. High school would come 1 day a week. At this time, the plan would be for preschool through 8th grade students to attend on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. High school students would attend on Wednesdays. High school students would complete online learning the other four days of their school week. Teachers may be requesting some high school students to attend multiple days, or even every day, to engage in onsite learning. (This would be our first choice if the state will approve this hybrid option, but 2B would be our back up plan).

Option 2B: In this option all students would be assigned as “A Day” students or “B Day” students. A’s would come to school on Mondays and Thursdays and B’s on Tuesdays and Fridays. Wednesdays would continue to be used as described in Option 1. In addition, Wednesdays would be used to support students with limited access to the internet as needed. All children in a family would be either A or B. No family would have 1 child attending A days and another child attending B days. Our plan is to have information to families by the end of July on whether they are A or B.

These options give us the opportunity to better provide for social distancing. This would allow us to provide on-site instruction to our younger students while continuing to support our high school

students. We are hopeful that these situations would be limited in duration. For example, we may be closed for 2 weeks doing full remote learning and then back with our hybrid plan for 2 weeks before returning to our full attendance plan.

Option 3: Remote Learning

In this option, all students would be required to do their learning remotely. Voluntary remote learning is no longer an option. Our Exira-EHK team has been working hard to improve the way we provide virtual instruction. If we are required to go to full remote learning, it will hopefully be for a shorter period of time. The duration would be based on local data and public health recommendations. The reality of this situation is that remote learning may be needed, so we are planning accordingly.

Cleaning Protocols

In order to mitigate the spread of the virus, we are implementing the following protocols:

- Buildings will be cleaned on a more frequent basis.
- Students and staff will be asked to help wipe high-touch areas several times throughout the day with safe sanitizers.
- Extra furniture with soft surfaces will be removed, as they are difficult to sanitize.
- Families will be asked to monitor temperatures and keep kids home if they have symptoms. This will be a document that parents will be required to sign. Details will be available on the website and emailed through JMC.
- The district will be sending out information about COVID-19 signs, symptoms, and when to keep children home.

PPE and Distancing

The following practices will be incorporated to help with mitigation:

- There will be an expectation for facial coverings, particularly during times when distancing is difficult (passing time for example). We are exploring options for providing students with facial coverings. We are also asking families to help us out by providing their own, as they are able. For the protection of all involved, we are asking for cooperation and support in our efforts to mitigate.
- Students will be distanced in classrooms and other areas to the extent possible. When practical, desks will be in rows and facing the same direction.

- We have a scheduling committee working on logistics for times when distancing is particularly difficult including recess, passing times, and before and after school. More to come on this.
- Middle and high school students will be asked to use hand sanitizer upon entering each classroom. Elementary students will be asked to sanitize often.
- Explicit instruction on hand sanitization and wearing of face coverings will be provided to all students.
- School busses will be sanitized daily.

Meals:

The following practices will be utilized to ensure safe feeding of students:

- Breakfast and lunch will be available to all students every day; regardless of if they are attending in person or remotely. That includes Wednesdays for all students. Families will be asked to indicate whether they intend to take advantage of meals on remote days, much like our summer grab-and-go program.
- Meals will be served to students. There will be no shared utensils.
- Checkout will be touchless if possible. Students may have a bar code that will be scanned to pay for meals.
- Lunchrooms will be kept to half capacity. That means some students will eat in the lunchroom and some will eat in another area (classroom, outside, etc.) on a rotating basis.
- Students eating in the lunchroom will have assigned tables.

Transportation:

It is very difficult to social distance on a school bus, so we are going to do the following to help ensure safety of students and drivers on the buses:

- Town routes will be reduced during the pandemic to prevent overcrowding. We are working on the updated town routes and will share soon. .
- Shuttle bussing presents several issues. More to come in this area.
- Families will be asked to provide transportation to the extent possible.
- Students are expected to wear face coverings when they are utilizing school transportation. They will also be asked to wear face coverings while loading and unloading.

At the risk of redundancy – we realize these plans create some difficulties for families in terms of planning and providing for childcare when we are in remote situations, which is

why we want to get this information to you as soon as possible. It is important for each family to plan for all three options as we may need to pivot from one to the other with little advance notice.

We hope our plans balance the need to have students physically present at school with the need to provide a safe and healthy learning environment. We know our plans are not perfect and we are open to respectful dialog around how we best do this work. We need your patience and support as we work through this difficult situation, and we commit to doing our very best to serve the students and families of our district.

We will be scheduling parent/family meetings for the end of July or early August and describing what Open House may look like, as well as answer any questions you might still have. Our first day of school on August 14th will have a 1:30 dismissal to allow our team time to meet and problem-solve before Monday, August 17.

I understand the many negatives that COVID-19 has brought on our nation, but there are also many positives. COVID-19 has provided those in the education field the opportunity to enhance and improve the instruction we provide our students. Through necessity, COVID-19 has allowed teachers to provide flexible and different learning modes to meet the needs of all students. In addition, teachers have had to adapt feedback and grading to better meet student needs when not physically in the school buildings. During this time, schools were able to focus on the essentials to prepare students for life after high school as well. Even though the pandemic compelled us to make these changes, they will benefit students, teachers, and families for years to come.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please know we are continuing to work hard to add detail and are committed to communicating that as soon as we have it.

I hope you are having a great summer and are staying healthy.

Sincerely,

Trevor Miller
Superintendent
Mary Bleth-Harris
6-12 Principal
Rochelle Bruns
PK-5 Principal