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It's Where You Want to Learn

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BETH ANN COLEMAN
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

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Dear Collingswood and Oaklyn School Families:

On June 26, Governor Murphy and his administration released [The Road Back – Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#), a guide to help schools prepare to reopen in the fall. The roadmap provided by the Department of Education relies heavily on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Since early June, the Collingswood and Oaklyn Schools have convened workgroups to begin making plans to restart school in September. The four workgroups are *School Health and Safety, Instruction and Mental Health, Operations and Finance*, and a *Steering* workgroup to help coordinate the efforts of the other groups and communicate that information to the community.

Over the last month, we have collected information from teachers, staff members, and families to help inform our plan development. We have also sought guidance from the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), both groups upon which we routinely rely for health-related issues. While one look around the country indicates that the COVID-19 situation is rapidly developing and *knowing that those conditions may ultimately impact our plans*, what I hope to do in this initial letter is share with you what we know today and what you may want to consider in planning for September. This is not a complete plan, but instead an attempt to provide you with some information to help you begin planning. We intend to release additional, more detailed information prior to the Governor's deadline of early August.

What We Know

1. The Governor has asked schools to develop a reopening plan that includes modified, in-person instruction. We are developing such a plan while accounting for the approximately 22% of our families who indicate they are not comfortable sending their children back to school at this time.
2. Some of our families want in-person instruction five full days per week while others do not feel safe sending their children back into school buildings at all. There is no single plan that will make everyone happy. The sentiment surrounding restarting school is as diverse as our communities. We are also aware that guidance from the medical community itself (CDC vs. AAP) is not always in agreement and has changed as more information has become available.
3. COVID-19 policies and decisions are intended to MITIGATE, BUT NOT ELIMINATE risk. From the AAP, "No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk associated with the virus that causes COVID-19, but implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk." We intend to implement those coordinated interventions to help keep your children and our staff safe.
4. Just as there are risks associated with sending students back to school buildings in September, there are also risks with maintaining a 100% remote learning environment for all students. Students rely on schools for academic and social development, as well as food security, physical activity, and safety. We will balance those needs in developing our plan.

5. September 2020 in schools will look nothing like September 2019.

What We Are Planning

1. Barring any last minute changes to Executive Orders, school will open in September with modified, in-person instruction. In order to maintain social distancing, students will attend school, in-person, at least two days per week, with additional school work provided for the days students are learning remotely. The typical school week will consist of five days including both in-person and remote instruction. In-person days will be scheduled, as best as possible, in “blue” and “gold” cohorts so that members of the same family attend school in-person on the same days.
2. We will begin the year conservatively, taking time to build relationships with students and getting them used to the new norms for their school day. As we settle into the new school year, we will constantly balance safety concerns with student needs and will likely add additional in-person opportunities for students with special needs, those learning English, and those who require additional academic support. We understand that remote learning worked well for some of our students and not so well for others. We will address each unique situation to the best of our abilities and will move as quickly as possible to provide additional services to students who need them, while maintaining safe, social distancing for all students and staff.
3. A 100% remote learning option will exist for families who choose that option.
4. We will follow a 2-tiered health screening model on in-person instruction days. First, we will ask families to screen their children before they leave home using a series of criteria provided. We will then briefly rescreen students, including a temperature check, prior to them entering the school building. We believe this process will further mitigate risk to our students and staff.
5. For in-person instruction days, we are planning to offer a drop-off window in the morning and a dismissal window in the afternoon to promote social distancing. We will shorten the student day to eliminate the challenges associated with offering lunch and recess. These challenges are simply not manageable in our schools and we believe this is where the greatest risk to students may occur. Exact schedules and times will be shared at a later date, but either Wednesday or Friday will be designated as the fully remote learning day when most students will learn from home. *Grab and Go* lunches will be available for eligible students and students will be encouraged to bring a mid-day snack and water from home.
6. Enhanced cleaning, sanitizing, and hygiene protocols will be in place in all of our schools. Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms and in high traffic common areas. We will routinely clean high touchpoint areas while taking steps to minimize contact with those areas in the first place. Finally, electrostatic sprayers will be used to sanitize our schools.
7. Childcare will be one of our most significant challenges. *Just Kids* will operate in our schools, but at significantly reduced capacity. Restrictions placed upon child care providers will not allow them to serve as many families as they have served in the past. We are working with *Just Kids* to provide extended after-school care and a full-day care option during days students are learning remotely. Again, capacity will be limited.

What Families Can Do Now

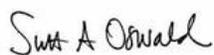
1. Students will be required to bring a face mask to school. As of now, they may not be required to wear the face mask at times when social distancing can be maintained, typically in the classroom

setting. They will be required to wear the face mask when entering, moving throughout, or exiting the building. While a mask will be required when social distancing cannot be maintained, face shields may be appropriate for those students who have a medical condition or disability that will not allow them to wear a mask. We continue to seek clarification on when a face shield is and is not sufficient. Families should begin identifying the most comfortable face mask options for their children and practice wearing masks so your children get used to them. Please avoid face masks with inappropriate language or graphics.

2. Please begin investigating childcare options now. This will be the biggest challenge in our communities. Our school districts and *Just Kids* will not be able to provide child care for every family who needs it. We will ask that only families with no other options rely on *Just Kids*. At this time, we have to consider *Just Kids* as an essential, rather than a convenient, service.
3. Statewide, you will see transportation emerge as one of the largest challenges. While we do not transport many students in Collingswood or Oaklyn, we do transport some and that, too, will be challenging. Please consider transporting your child to school if at all possible as this may free up a seat for a family that does not have the option.
4. The State of New Jersey has issued an incoming travel advisory indicating that all individuals entering New Jersey from states with a significant spread of COVID-19 should quarantine for 14-days after leaving that state. Currently, there are nineteen states on that list. Please be aware that if your family travels to one of those states and returns within two weeks of the start of the school year, you will be advised to self-quarantine, which may delay the start of your school year.

Please understand that we all want our students – your children – back in school full-time, five days per week. Right now, given the guidance provided by the State of New Jersey, that is not possible. I also must point out that given the rapid changes in the COVID-19 situation around the country, these plans are only as good as the information we have today. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with as much information as we have right now so that you can begin planning for September 2020. We know this is not all of the information you need, but it is a start. As we continue to plan for health and safety, academic, social-emotional and mental health, transportation, food, and many, many other considerations, we will do so with the safety and well-being of your children and our staff members first and foremost on our minds. We will share additional information as it becomes available.

Sincerely,



Scott A. Oswald, Ed.D.
Superintendent