

NIPPERSINK SCHOOL DISTRICT 2 RICHMOND-BURTON CHSD 157

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff,

District 2 and District 157 began developing our Road Map to Reopen Schools as early as last May with the full intention of getting our students back into in person learning as soon it was safe to do so. To develop this plan both Districts formed a Joint Task Force and created a plan to safely reopen schools based on the guidance given to us at the time by the ISBE/IDPH. Days after releasing our Road Map to Reopen School, ISBE released an updated document with new guidelines. In addition, the IDPH continues to modify their guidelines for schools. We know that these agencies are doing their best related to the continually changing information. However, it has simply become clear that there are too many unknowns about this highly contagious, deadly virus to have full confidence to reopen safely. The following are a few examples of challenges that school districts are facing:

- Schools must now send home or deny entry of a student or staff member if ANY of the ten COVID-19 symptoms are present. They will then be required to quarantine, provide a negative COVID-19 test, or a physician's note stating they do not have COVID-19 in order to return to school. Because COVID-19 symptoms are very common, we anticipate a large number of students and/or staff will be excluded from in-person learning.
- Six-foot of social distancing should be maintained with fidelity, throughout the school day, including transporting students. Guidelines on social distancing continue to change and lack clarity from ISBE and IDPH.
- The new quarantine guidelines to be implemented by schools will create a major disruption to an already modified school day. Due to these now changing guidelines, we anticipate a large number of students and/or staff will need to be excluded from in-person learning.
- ISBE and the CDC are now recommending all students be placed in strict cohorts to minimize potential illness and maximize the possibility of contact tracing. This would impact each grade level differently, but it is impossible to effectively implement educational opportunities in a strict cohort format.
- Staffing shortages due to staff concerns over COVID-19 transmission. This could leave our schools without enough teachers to conduct regular classes.
- The rate of infection continues to increase in McHenry County, moving the county in the warning category for some of the state matrices.

After much deliberation with the local health department, other area school districts, and both Boards of Education regarding these new guidelines, we have made the very difficult decision to not start the school year as we had planned and hoped for. Nippersink SD 2 and Richmond-Burton Community High School District 157 students will begin the 2020-2021 school year in full remote learning for at least the first quarter. In addition, **we have moved the first day of school back to Monday, August 24, 2020**. This will give administrators and teachers time to prepare and educate parents and students on remote learning expectations.

Remote learning at D2 and D157 will look and feel completely different than during last spring. In addition to planning for a return to school, both Districts' staff have been working to improve the instructional delivery during remote learning. There will be an increased focus on ensuring daily virtual connections are made with teachers and students in class and in small groups. In addition, we will be working to provide parents with greater support to help their student(s) succeed. More information will be forthcoming from both districts and your student's principal early next week regarding our new remote learning plan.

Please know both Boards of Education, administration, and our Joint Task Force did not come to this decision lightly. We have studied every potential scenario and option that would let our students return for in-person learning. Understanding the weight of this decision and the significant impact on our families is always foremost in our minds. Unfortunately, any scenario or option we considered would have been insufficient to bring us to an acceptable level of compliance with health guidelines. We will continually reassess the conditions associated with this pandemic to determine when we can reopen partially or fully in the future.

We remain committed to providing an excellent educational experience for our students. Over the next week both the Districts and each school's principal will be providing information on our newly improved remote learning plan, timelines, and instructional supports for students and parents/guardians that will accompany our remote learning plan. We greatly appreciate your dedication, support, and flexibility during these unseen historic times.

Sincerely,

Tom Lind

Dr. Tom Lind
Superintendent of Schools