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School Year Update-School Starts August 31st

1 message

Dr. Bridget O'Connell <superintendent@palisadesd.org>

Fri, Aug 14, 2020 at 6:10 PM

Reply-To: dholmes@palisadesd.org

To: dholmes@palisadesd.org

Dear Palisades Families,

Since the Board approved the Health and Safety plan on July 22nd, we have been working with you to determine which mode of education you would like for your child(ren) for the first half of the school year. After we received that information, our team of administrators, teachers, counselors, secretaries and custodians have been:

- Making follow up phone calls to families who had additional questions
- Aligning face to face and online student schedules with staffing
- Hiring long term substitute teachers to support both our face to face and online learners
- Measuring and re-measuring all spaces in each building to ensure we can distance our students at least 6 feet apart
- Purchasing technology (hardware and software) to support teachers and students in the virtual environment
- Securing personal safety and cleaning supplies to keep our students, faculty and staff protected
- Preparing for new teacher induction next week and all teacher in-service in two weeks

I once again want to thank you for your support through this process by replying to the pre registration survey. Our face to face and Palisades Cyber Academy sections are now assigned, and I'm happy to share that all classrooms will have a 6' distance between students. Any changes at this point, will be handled on a case by case basis to keep our in person students distanced and cyber class sizes manageable. The next pre registration opportunity will occur toward the end of November, and we will go through the same process of balancing class sizes.

I also want to thank all of those who have worked tirelessly over the summer to ensure a safe and educationally successful return to school in a few short weeks. A special thanks to our coaching staff and marching band staff who have engaged our students on site over the past eight weeks in the activities they love. This has been a summer like no other. While we try to use the summer to recharge and refresh, I know that many of us are heading into this school year truly exhausted. We cannot hit pause prior to the start of school in order to catch our breath, so I ask that we all exhibit an exceptional level of grace, patience and optimism with ourselves and each other.

Last night I presented a return to school update at our Education Programs and Services meeting. You can access the full presentation here [https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pali/Board.nsf/files/BSFV337822FC/\\$file/Palisades%20Reopening%20Update%20EPS%20presentation%20August%2013%202020.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/pali/Board.nsf/files/BSFV337822FC/$file/Palisades%20Reopening%20Update%20EPS%20presentation%20August%2013%202020.pdf)

There are several highlights that I wanted to call to your attention:

1. First day of school will be on August 31st but will only be a ½ day for K-5 students to acclimate them to the new learning environment, as well as for 6th and 9th grade students for orientation; of course only those who chose face to face need be present. The afternoon will be for our teachers to continue to refine skills gained in professional development the week of August 24th and/or adding content to Canvas/Google Classroom and/or collaborating with colleagues on student-related needs.
2. The first day for Upper Bucks County Technical School (UBCTS) students will be on September 2nd and they are presently determining how their schedule will look. I should have this information solidified by

next week for those students and families.

3. Due to COVID-related manufacturing delays, **PHS will begin school virtually (for all high school students, with the exception of 9th grade orientation on August 31st) until Wednesday, September 16th.** This delay will allow time for the casement to be delivered (ships August 21st), installed, followed by plumbers to install gas and water lines and electricians to run power where necessary. After that, our science teachers and custodians may have time to prepare the rooms. We will continue to transport our UBCTS students during this time so they do not miss any learning opportunities.
4. On July 22nd, the Board approved a resolution to include both face to face and virtual days as counting toward the 180 day requirement. In order to extend two of our natural breaks, **we will convert November 23rd and the ½ day on November 24th to full virtual days for all students and staff, as well as December 21, 22 and ½ day on 23rd.** These are still instructional days but will be held virtually. Please mark your calendars now so that you are prepared for your child(ren) to participate in instruction on those days.
5. The state universal masking order remains in effect; however, since we are able to keep our students 6' apart in all classrooms, **teachers may allow students to take mask breaks in all classes provided students remain 6' apart.** If a teacher is moving throughout the room, all students should have their masks on. If students are moving throughout the room, or working in groups at a distance of less than 6', students should have their masks on. The duration of this mask break is based on how long students can remain 6' from each other.
6. Based on our transportation feedback, 30% of our routes will have 2 students per seat and **70% of our routes will have 1 student per seat.**
7. **Meal distribution will be available for our students participating remotely via a 10-10:30AM pick up at each of our school locations several days during the week.** If you have multiple children in various buildings, you will receive more information regarding which building will be your pick up location so you don't have to travel to as many as 3 different locations.
8. As I explained at the EPS meeting last evening, **there are 3 reasons for switching a building to a hybrid or virtual model.** Those reasons would be: excess number of students who return face to face so that 6' distance cannot be maintained (change to hybrid); inability to staff building due to leaves (change to virtual); or changes to community health data (switch to virtual). Remaining flexible and reactive to opening school in this current environment is imperative.

Thank you again for your support and patience as we prepare for the start of the school year. I look forward to the new school year! Stay well!

Kind regards,



Dr. Bridget O'Connell

Superintendent

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