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September 1, 2020

Dear Cherry Hill Public Schools Community,

This has certainly been a summer unlike any that we can remember, as we have prepared for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year. What is typically a time filled with eager anticipation and excitement about class assignments and reconnecting with friends, has become a time filled with a great deal of trepidation and concern. This is a time when the guidelines for public education in the State of New Jersey shift, it seems, with the tide. The fluidity of the state's ambiguous directives has provided constant fodder for debate and dissension.

A tremendous amount of information can be found on our [website](#), outlining the work that began in May to prepare for the opening of the school year. A brief timeline of this work:

- May 2020: The District convened a Return to Work Committee and a Return to School Committee to prepare for the transition back to school buildings being open. The committees met regularly and made recommendations for the WE Return to Learn Plan.
- July 14, 2020: The WE Return to Learn Plan – including a choice for families between a hybrid learning model and a full remote learning model – was formally introduced, in draft form, to the community at the Board of Education Work Session.
- July 28, 2020: A revised WE Return to Learn Plan was presented at the Board of Education Action Meeting.
- August 11, 2020: The Board of Education endorsed the [42-page WE Return to Learn Plan](#) at their Action Meeting.
- August 27, 2020: The New Jersey Department of Education formally approved the [WE Return to Learn Plan](#).

The most important resource in our school district is the human resource. The staff members who dedicate themselves to the education of Cherry Hill's children are foundational to the success of our District. Classrooms throughout the district are prepared as we eagerly anticipate our students' arrival and the joyful sounds of learning.

This past weekend, we received letters from Cherry Hill Education Association groups at all of our 19 schools. While the letters varied with requests specific to each building, there was overwhelming clarity in the primary message: Our staff's request to delay the opening of the school year to allow for more preparation to teach in the hybrid model and to open on a remote-only schedule to allow for greater mitigation of their concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus. This is combined with an ever-increasing list of leave of absence requests from certificated staff as the school year is set to begin. The current availability of appropriately certificated substitutes is limited in key instructional areas.

Our school buildings are prepared to welcome our staff and students for the year, but we must honor the concerns our staff has raised. To that end, we will open the school year on September 8, 2020 on a full remote schedule. We will institute the remote-only plan, as defined in the [WE Return to Learn Plan](#), through November 4, 2020. This remote-only plan is robust with live instruction every day for our students, as teachers will deliver instruction from their classrooms during this time.

We regret to inform you that we will be unable to staff our School Aged Child Care (SACC) program for the duration of the remote-only learning period, through November 9, 2020. Therefore, we are unable to offer SACC during this time. Information regarding payment refunds will be sent to SACC parents from the SACC office.

As planned, we will be distributing Chromebooks/devices to families who need them. You will receive details on distribution from your building principal.

Meals (5 breakfasts and 5 lunches) will be distributed on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 and then each Monday beginning September 14 from 2-6 pm at High Schools East and West to students who qualify for free/reduced price meals. The [Free/Reduced Meals application](#) is available on the District website.

We will send out information regarding fall sports in the coming days.

We understand these new challenges are not easy for any of us and that this decision is going to cause frustration and anger for many. We also know that as a community, we all can meet the challenges and get through them, together. The ideal is for our staff and students to all be back in our schools together – and we *will* get there, we are sure. This time of frustration requires all of us to communicate well and respectfully, and to maintain a focus on the children of our community.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards,



Dr. Joseph Meloche
Superintendent



Mrs. Lisa Saidel
Board President



Mrs. Laurie Neary
Board Vice-President