Thursday, June 18, 2020

Dear Pottsgrove Community & Families,

Across the country, school districts and educational institutions are analyzing the pros and cons of a variety of scenarios to employ as we reopen our schools in the fall. While everyone hopes that we can return to normal operations sooner than later, it is prudent to plan for a variety of scenarios to ensure that we can handle any situation we face when it is time for our students and staff to return to school. The purpose of this communication is to share with our community the information we are using to plan to reopen Pottsgrove safely.

Reopening Pottsgrove School District
There is currently no shortage of information emerging across the country about what school may “look like” in the fall. Our planning and collaboration with local health officials continue, and our planning has enveloped a number of experts to determine the best path forward as we welcome our students and staff back to school in the fall. The current research and literature focused on reopening districts for the 2020-2021 school year has conveyed and suggested several scenarios for leaders to contemplate.

Our first step is to complete the mandated, Health & Safety Plan. All districts in the Commonwealth must provide a detailed set of recommendations and mitigation strategies for the reopening of schools.

While we have included several scenarios in the table below for transparency purposes, it should not be assumed that Pottsgrove has made final decisions about a specific scenario. In fact, we continue to plan for a variety of scenarios and hope (operative word - hope!) to be able to provide greater clarity to our community in mid-July.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Schedule Scenarios Referenced in COVID-19 Research and Literature</th>
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<td><strong>Regular Schedules</strong> - Students return to school and follow their typical schedules; social distancing, hygiene, and limited movement throughout schools would be encouraged to the extent to the best of our abilities.</td>
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<td><strong>Two-Day Rotation</strong> - Students attend school two days per week with virtual learning in place for the other three days; virtual learning includes both synchronous/live instruction and asynchronous work.</td>
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<td><strong>Virtual Learning (K-12)</strong> - Virtual learning continues; instruction includes both synchronous, asynchronous, and live instruction.</td>
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Until we send an official communication that specifically states the conditions under which we will open schools in the fall, any conjecture, speculation, or rumors are just that - conjecture, speculation, and rumors.
**Teaching and Learning**

Q: If virtual learning continues, will there be opportunities for synchronous/live learning? Will teachers be able to give feedback in real-time or just via email?
A: If virtual learning continues in the fall, there will be greater opportunities for synchronous/live learning. District administrators, in collaboration with our staff, will develop clear parameters for synchronous/live learning and will employ a schedule to support students as they access instruction. In this model, teachers will be able to provide feedback both in real-time and via email.

Q: Will the curriculum be revised to account for lost time this school year and to account for standardized testing next year?
A: We are moving towards a standards-based approach to instruction; therefore, yes, teaching and learning in Pottsgrove will absolutely account for lost time during the 2019-2020 school year. In fact, teachers and students have been focused on instruction and work aligned to the most critical skills and standards students need to be successful in their future grade level/courses. This standards-based approach will allow students and staff to focus on essential learning to ensure success.

Q: Who should we contact if virtual learning is not working for our children?
A: The first point of contact is always the child’s teacher. From there, if issues persist, the building principal is the next level of contact.

Q: Will the District offer summer programming this year?
A: Summer programming this year, including ESY and Summer Success, will be virtual.

Q: When will the elementary gifted screenings take place?
A: The screenings that typically take place in first grade will take place at the beginning of second grade. The assessments are normed; therefore, this delay will not affect students’ scores adversely.

**Supporting Students & Staff**

Q: How will the District support students or staff who are immunocompromised?
A: The District will work with immunocompromised students and staff on a case-by-case basis. We are committed to the health and well-being of everyone.

Q: What does the District plan to do to help ease the transitions between buildings (e.g., elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school)?
A: As conditions change and we can allow entry into our buildings, we will publish a schedule for some live tours. During the first days of school in the fall, we will ensure that all students are well-acquainted with their schools.

Q: How will the District transport students to and from school given the need for social distancing, etc.?
A: The District is exploring a number of options to identify how to best transport students. More information on transportation will be shared in the summer.

Q: What is the District’s plan for kindergarten orientation?
A: When we are able to welcome folks into our buildings, we will share a schedule with opportunities for incoming kindergarteners and their families to visit our schools.
Q: How will lunch and recess be handled in the fall?
A: Food services will follow CDC guidelines and best practices for handling food. Chartwell’s, our food vendor has been an outstanding partner and we will continue to work closely to ensure compliance to all state and federal guidelines. We will develop a schedule for students to have lunch that allows them to interact with their friends and classmates. Recess will be held to the extent possible given the CDC guidance in place at the time. The District is committed to providing meaningful breaks for students during the day.

Q: What PPE will be required? What if students cannot wear masks due to sensory issues?
A: The determination of wearing PPE, including masks, will be made later this summer and will be based upon the guidance from the CDC and from our local health officials. The District is committed to supporting students who may experience difficulty while wearing a mask or face covering.

Athletics & Co-Curriculars

Q: Will athletics and extracurriculars be held in the fall?
A: The District continues to monitor information coming from PIAA (for athletics) and the information shared from the CDC and local health officials for both athletics and other extracurricular offerings. Although no official decisions have been made, it is believed that athletics and co-curricular offerings will largely be scaled back in the fall. We are currently working on a Health and Safety Plan to outline steps as we move into the “Green” phase. Additional information will be communicated as we receive it.

The District remains committed to communication and transparency as we plan for 2020-2021. Until then, please know that work continues to ensure a smooth transition back to school for all of our students and staff members.

We hope that all of our students, families, and community members remain safe and healthy!

Sincerely,
Dr. William R. Shirk, Ed. D
Superintendent