



July 28, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We wish to update you on the process for our development of an extensive plan for the 2020-21 school year as we navigate the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, nearly 100 district-wide stakeholders met on five different committees to discuss, analyze, and provide input on the many aspects of the state's requirements for districts to open for the 2020-21 school year. Work will continue this week as we develop the plan to submit to the state by the July 31 deadline.

Based on the survey input we received from parents ([click here for survey results](#)), along with the requirements of the state for the re-opening of schools and guidance from the NYS Department of Health and other safety resources, ***it is clear that 100% in-person instruction is not wise or feasible for the start of the 2020-21 school year.*** Therefore, our work over the next few days is to finalize a plan for a **“hybrid” model of instruction (portion of the time in school and a portion at home online), as well as a plan for 100% remote/online instruction.**

The five committees focused on the major areas of planning for the new school year: Instructional, Health and Safety, Transportation, Nutrition, and Social Emotional Learning. Committees were made up of parents, faculty/staff, community members, local agencies, and administrators. The valuable input and considerations they have provided are essential in our development of a comprehensive plan that we will put forward to the state at the end of the week. We will also be meeting with student groups during this week to seek their input.

We will be sharing more information regarding the process and, when complete, the plan itself on our website. We will also be asking for parents to review our plan to identify the learning format that will best fit the educational needs of the family. This process will take place August 3-7. The collection of this information is crucial to the development of schedules, creation of transportation routes, and preparation of facilities for the beginning of the school year.

Please keep in mind that by order of Governor Cuomo, the re-opening of schools in any format is contingent upon our region's 14-day COVID-19 infection rate remaining below 5%. If at any time after August 1 the region's infection rate rises above 9% over a seven-day average, the governor has required that all school buildings close until he returns students back to schools. Instruction during this time of closure would continue with all students completing remote/online instruction.

The start of the 2020-21 school year will be challenging, but with your assistance and cooperation, our administration, faculty, and staff will make this happen for our children so that we can provide for their education, while meeting the guidelines of health and safety.

In the coming days and weeks, please make sure to listen to our auto-calls and check your emails for next steps in the process of beginning school in the fall.

If you have questions, please contact your principal or email me at tdouglas@horseheadsdistrict.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools