August 12, 2020

Greetings,

The opening of school is approaching very quickly. I am sure that everyone’s anxiety about what the beginning of school will look like is rising. I’d like to attempt to help soothe some of that anxiety by sharing information, based on today’s current COVID conditions. Please know that the safety, health, and welfare for our students, staff, and community are our highest priority. We also believe that being in school, face-to-face with our students, is paramount to a successful education.

We have taken great measures to ensure that we are doing everything possible to prevent the spread of the virus. Please be patient and understand that we are attempting to think of every possible scenario for an ever changing situation. Please allow me to discuss some of the “knowns” that we are addressing and the expectations we will put forth to our students and families.

First, I will address the issue around facemasks. Per the Governor’s order and that of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), all students and staff will be required to wear facemasks when the possibility to be within 6 feet of any individual is possible. That being said, student desks in the elementary school have been placed 6 feet apart in every classroom. Students will be taught to keep the social distance of 6 feet between them and the next person and to wear a mask if they need to get closer than that. Students will be permitted to take off their masks when given breaks and separated from their classmates.

We are going to ask you to screen your children at home every day. Ask them if they are feeling well. Check temperatures, if possible. Any symptoms of fever, cough, pink-eye, achiness, should excuse students to be absent from school. If a student presents with any symptoms while in school, they will be immediately quarantined, monitored, and sent home. Please understand that we will be vigilant in screening as well.

We will be instituting protocols for monitoring temperatures, social distancing, and reducing foot traffic throughout the building. Frequent hand washing will be taught and encouraged. Times will be provided throughout the day when students will be able to use the restroom and maintain social distancing guidelines. Lunches will likely be held in the classrooms. However, depending upon numbers of students, they could go to the cafeteria, assigning students to a seat where they will eat their lunches maintaining social distancing.

Bus transportation will continue to be provided. However, if you choose to bring your child to school and pick your child up after, please communicate that to the office early in the day. We are attempting to limit the number of students on buses and keep them far enough apart to meet social distancing guidelines. We encourage you to bring your child to school if possible. We are also going to limit visitors and volunteers. As
much as we would like to be welcoming and inclusive of the entire community, we must keep people socially distanced.

The educational plan that the School Board has adopted is one of choice. You may choose between a traditional, (face-to-face program), a hybrid program (alternating days 1,3,5 or 2,4,6), and completely online. A survey has been posted to the Sapphire Community Portal for you to complete for each student. Please complete the survey as soon as possible, before August 10, 2020.

Our website, www.millsd.us has a School Reopening Quicklink to view our District’s Phased Reopening Health and Safety Plan. Please view this document, as it details the plan our school board has adopted for the reopening of school. Do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

Edward T. Sanders, Jr.
Elementary Principal