June 26, 2020

Greetings H-F Families,

For the last several weeks, we have been working very hard to plan for all the contingencies that will be needed for the upcoming school year. Our focus has been on these three guiding principles: 1) **The safety and well-being of our students and staff;** 2) **Implementing a viable, engaging and rigorous curriculum;** and 3) **Implementing programming that will take into account the social and emotional well-being of our students.**

Although there is no way to eliminate risk altogether, we believe that by following the guidance and safety guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), we can significantly reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on our campus. **Doing so, however, will require a partnership between home and school that is committed to taking care of ourselves and each other with care and compassion.**

**Academic Schedule Options**

There are two main options that are being considered; each depends upon which phase of Governor Pritzker’s “**Restore Illinois**” plan the state is in at any given time. We anticipate that our region will be in **Phase 4** when the school year begins in August. It is very likely that the district will utilize more than one model and/or schedule this school year, depending on the conditions on campus and the conditions throughout our region. Listed below are three scenarios with 1 and 2 being the most likely models implemented this fall.

**Scenario One:** The implementation of a **Blended Model that provides both online and in-person instruction (a Phase 4 option).** A student would come to school on alternating days and receive online instruction/work on the days when the student is not in class. The district is also working on plans for students who will require a fully online option and the resulting certification requirements that would be necessary.

**Scenario Two:** The district would continue with an **improved, fully online model that includes more virtual interaction with classroom teachers (required in Phase 1, 2 & 3 and an option in Phase 4).** In this model, it may also be possible to also bring specific groups of students or specialty courses back to campus periodically to facilitate specific curriculum and instructional needs.

**Scenario Three:** All students and staff return to school as usual. **This is only an option if Illinois is in Stage 5,** which would mean that a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 is readily available. The size of our campus, student enrollment, travel between classes, lunch and bus schedule limitations prohibit H-F from returning to a regular school day prior to our region being in Stage 5.

**Activities & Sports**

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) has developed criteria and safety protocols for student participation in sports and activities during both Phase 3 and Phase 4. We believe that providing students with the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities is an important part of their social and emotional development and mental well-being. While we cannot yet say for certain what the athletic or activity seasons and participation may look like, we are hopeful that we will have organized groups of students participating in some fashion on campus in controlled environments or virtually, even if we are facilitating the curriculum completely online or in a blended model. Sports and activities can more easily meet the gathering criteria due to the smaller group sizes and program flexibility.
ISBE Requirements

Earlier this week the ISBE came out with additional guidance that will sharpen and, at the same time, restrict our options for the upcoming school year. These are some key requirements and guidelines that will shape the plans for opening school. Some of the most restrictive requirements and hurdles we are attempting to overcome are listed below.

1. **Transportation Restrictions:** Only 50 students can be on each school bus and each student must wear a mask.
2. **Definition of Space:** Only 50 individuals can be in any one space at a time and within that space students must social distance as much as possible and wear a mask. Our classrooms can only fit 10-15 students and still meet the requirements and guidelines.
3. **Social Distancing:** ISBE states that social distancing must be implemented as much as possible. Social distancing is defined as being six feet away from another person. ISBE guidance does not require students to be six feet apart in a classroom if all individuals are wearing masks but strongly recommends this practice. ISBE does require that students are six feet apart during lunch periods.
4. **COVID-19 Diagnosis - Student:** If a student is confirmed to have COVID-19, all individuals who had “close contact” with that student (defined as within six feet of the individual for at least 15 minutes) must quarantine at home for 14 days. This would mean that about half of the students and the teacher in each of the infected student’s six to seven classes would need to quarantine at home for 14 days. In addition, if the infected student was involved in a sport or activity, many of those teammates and sponsors would also have to quarantine at home for 14 days.
5. **COVID-19 Diagnosis - Teacher:** If a teacher is confirmed to have COVID-19, the same restrictions apply. This would mean that many of the students in their five to six classes must quarantine at home for 14 days. In addition, if the teacher is a coach or activity sponsor, many of those students would also need to quarantine at home for 14 days.
6. **Cleaning & Disinfecting:** When a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case is known, the classroom(s) or office area(s) must be closed for at least 24-48 hours to complete the required cleaning procedures.
7. **Teacher & Staff Availability:** Just as our school is considering blended learning (Scenario 1), the schools of our staff’s children are making some of the same plans. If many districts decide to do blended learning, there may not be enough teachers and staff to properly staff our classrooms and campus. The majority of our staff has children who are between the ages of 1 to 13, and this may affect our ability to facilitate in-school learning due to staffing levels.
8. **Medical Conditions:** The number of students, teachers and staff members who have medical conditions and the required accompanying medical certification — which may preclude them from attending school on campus during a pandemic — may result in having to move all classes online (Scenario 2).

These are just eight of the many factors that will have an impact on our decisions over the next few weeks. We are providing this information as a precursor to our request for all of our parents/guardians to complete a survey that will be sent to you via email next week. Please take some time to digest the information in this letter, reflect on the needs of your student(s) and family, and review other guidance that is available from the ISBE, IDPH, IHSA and the “Restore Illinois” plan. These actions will assist you in completing the survey in a manner that will provide us with the important feedback we need to make the best decisions for our students, staff and families as we plan the upcoming school year at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School. We look forward to your input on the upcoming survey, and we would like to thank everyone for their patience and resiliency during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Dr. Von Mansfield
Superintendent

Dr. Jerry Lee Anderson
Principal