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August 19, 2020

Hello Newport Families,

As we enter the 2020-2021 school year I want to clarify, update, and provide you some important information.

The District's plans have been developed based on research, regulations, and guidelines provided to the District from the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (PDE) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

School Calendar Update

On Tuesday, August 18, 2020 the District's Board of School Directors approved an update to the school calendar. The new calendar maintains the first day of school as August 25, 2020 and the last day of school and graduation date of June 3, 2021. There are no changes to the calendar for the first three weeks of school, with student days remaining unchanged through September 11, 2020. Beginning September 14, 2020 through December 23, 2020, students will attend school in person Monday through Thursday with Friday being a remote learning day. The change to this Blended Learning Model allows the District the following opportunities.

- Provides a full 72 hours without students in buildings, allowing for a thorough weekly cleaning.
- Reduces the number of days students are being transported.
- Provides the professional staff the needed time to ensure high quality virtual instruction through development and implementation of distance learning plans.

During these cyber days the students will have an expectation of completing class assignments. Please see the updated calendar [here](#).

Transportation

At this time, transportation pick-up and drop-off sites and times have not been modified from the previous school year. However, times may fluctuate based on a decrease in riders. Trixy Soccio is contacting families with Kindergarten students to inform them of bus assignments and approximate pick-up/drop-off times. Please contact Trixy at tsoccio@newportsd.org with any questions.

Per PDE and DOH guidance, all students are required to wear face coverings while being transported.

Health Screening

This year more than ever, we will be relying on you to monitor the health and well-being of your children. We ask that you check your child's temperature and monitor for other potential COVID-19 symptoms daily and prior to sending them to school. Please keep them home if they are ill. Being able to continue with in-person instruction will be based on the health of our faculty and students. All decisions regarding school closures will be based on guidance from the DOH. For symptom screening protocols, please refer to the District's [School Symptom Screening Tool](#).

Face Coverings

On August 17, 2020 PDE released an order that contained new regulations on face coverings for school districts. While the new regulation states that students must wear face coverings at all times, the face coverings may be removed for periodic ten-minute breaks. Exceptions will also be made for students with health conditions. The link to the new PDE order can be found [here](#).

School Operations

The District has made a modification to the beginning of the school day. Students will not be permitted to enter the buildings prior to 7:30 am. The students will enter the building and go directly to their classroom. High/middle school students will go directly to their first period class and use of lockers will not be permitted. In lieu of the lockers, students will be allowed to use backpacks throughout the day.

At the elementary school, students can begin entering the building at 7:30 am and will go directly to their classroom. A grab and go breakfast will be available for all students K-12 and they will eat in the classrooms. Lunches will also be provided differently to promote social distancing. At the elementary level, students will eat lunch in their classrooms, at the high/middle school, students will have many areas throughout the building to promote social distancing.

While the health and well-being of our students and staff are a major focus right now, we must also continue to be mindful of physical safety while school is in session. The district has various safeguards in place to support this effort. One of them is the continued periodic presence of security personnel on district property. You may routinely see these individuals,

but please do not be alarmed as they act as a proactive safety measure to enhance physical security of our facilities. Another change is that all visitors must be approved by the building Principal to enter the buildings. If you are dropping off or picking up your child outside of regular times the building offices will have a screening process for you to follow.

More specific building and classroom-level operational details will be provided.

Newport Cyber Academy Program

Over 100 students have opted to start the school year completely virtual as part of the Newport Cyber Academy Program (NCAP). With this option, we have been able to keep our students here in our district but also meet the unique needs of our students and families. If you decide that you would like to explore this option, please contact Scott McGrady at samcgrady@newportsd.org.

It continues to be a challenging and dynamic time for schools as federal and state guidance, regulations, and expectations constantly change. We are committed to provide Newport students with an excellent education and feel our plans allow us to do this, while considering the health and safety of our students, staff, and community.

We look forward to the start of a school year that will be like no other! We are dedicated to making it a great year for our students and families no matter what.

Sincerely,

Ryan Neuhard
Superintendent
Newport School District