

River Bend Families,

9-4-20

I have appreciated the support and flexibility you have all shown our students and staff since starting school August 19th. With Fulton High School starting in a remote phase, many have asked when the high school students will come back and when we will have the PK-8th grade back more frequently. I hope this letter will address both of those questions.

The administration has been in conversation since school has started to determine when it is safe to return HS students to the building. One major factor in deciding when to return students to the building has been local COVID data. We have been tracking COVID-19 data closely since July 27th for our two zip codes 61230 and 61252. Since starting the tracking, our positive COVID-19 cases have gone from 72 up to 128. When looking at cases under the age of 20, Whiteside County currently has 12 positive cases (6 of those cases are in the 61252 zip code). We know that two of the cases are or were Fulton High School Cases. Our PK-8th grade has not had a positive case yet. Students and staff have been working hard in all of the schools to social distance, wear a mask, symptom check, and frequently wash hands. Families have also done a great job letting us know about symptoms. If we keep this up, we believe we can expand our on-site learning in a slow and thoughtful manner. I have asked the principals to begin planning for expansion of on-site learning starting with bringing the high schools students on-campus in some manner. We will closely monitor the week following Labor Day, and if cases do not increase with high school students, we will bring them back on Tuesday September 22nd.

Another consideration that the school district is weighing as heavily as returning the students to in person is the academic opportunities that students are being presented with each week. Beginning Monday, September 14, we will be having all K-12 students receive instruction remotely. This accomplishes a few things for our students. First, and most importantly, it allows students to have class with a teacher at least 3 times a week. Secondly, it keeps the anchor and boat schedule the same for parents and students each week. This also gives us an opportunity to experience and practice an enhanced remote learning program if it becomes necessary at a later date.

IDPH has provided some guidance on pausing and returning to school at the following link:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-Adaptive-Pause-Metrics.pdf>

Using this link and consulting with the Whiteside County Health Department, our positivity case rate is below 5% in the under 20 age category. Our high school case numbers are also under the 5% positivity rate. Our community positivity rate is 9.1%. Expanding on-site learning for high school students can be considered.

PK-8th grade will begin expansion by bringing specific groups of students to school each day. Principals will be working with parents to begin that implementation. The schools are currently working with their staff to determine the best means to continue the expansion of students to in person learning. Each building will determine a plan that best works for the students and staff.

The administration from each building will communicate those plans to parents and students once they have been developed.

Please keep in mind that any return and expansion to on-site learning is very fluid and can be changed or shut down rapidly if positive COVID-19 cases increase. Our plans for expanding on-site learning will be gradual and may include specific grade levels, or single days at a time. We are very cautious about overwhelming our staff and/or our system. For example, if one or two bus drivers had to be quarantined, we may not be able to offer bussing. If a class of students had two or more cases, we might have to close the room for one to ten days to clean and address quarantine guidelines. If teachers get exposed, we may have to offer classes remotely during the 10 to 24 day quarantine period. There are many variables and we will do our best to serve the needs of the students, families, community and staff.

The principals will be emailing and posting building specific plans as all plans are finalized.

Breakfast and Lunch Update: We were just notified that the USDA free breakfast and lunch program will continue through December 31, 2020. This means that all students PK-12th grade will be receiving breakfast and lunch at no cost during this time period. All families/students will have the chance to receive free meals. Sign-up is required on remote learning days. Starting September 8th all breakfasts and lunches will be free. Stacey Collachia will send a registration and sign-up document to all families who wish to receive meals at home. Students eating at school will not be required to sign-up.

Thank you for your patience, grace, and support

Dr. Darryl Hogue, Superintendent
Mr. Robert Gosch, FHS Principal
Mr. Patrick Henrekin, FHS Asst Principal
Mrs. Kathleen Schipper, RBMS Principal
Mr. Jeffrey Hoese, FES Principal