



Holly Area Schools

Excellence in Action!

August 11, 2020

Dear Holly Area Schools Families,

In addition to the video announcement, I am sharing this letter with an important update regarding our Return to Learn Plan.

Today, I come to you with a heavy heart regarding the start of the new school year. The first day of school should always be full of excitement and joy. It is a day that traditionally brings so much happiness to students, parents, and staff. For me personally, I have been a part of over 40 "First Days of School"; first as a kindergarten student, then as a teacher in my own classroom, next as a building Principal and more recently as a Superintendent and a parent.

Sadly, the coronavirus has taken away the joy of the first day of school leaving so many of us with fear, anxiety, frustration and several unknowns.

Only 5 weeks ago, our district received a 63-page document with an Executive Order outlining several requirements and recommendations for reopening school. Since that time, I am proud to say that our team has worked well beyond our capacity to put together a great return to learn plan for our district. We did this with no further guidance from our state leaders or health departments.

We reviewed survey results, multiple resources, consulted regularly with the County ISD, collaborated with professional colleagues in other districts, and launched a teacher reopening committee. In addition, I participated on a county-wide task force with other Superintendents. We have also collected and responded to staff and parent questions through an ongoing FAQ process. We have relied on facts presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and have consulted with local medical experts.

Even with all of this research, consulting, and collaboration, we have never been presented with a health and safety risk or as some may define it, a risk assessment of how this virus can lead to illness or worse.

As your Superintendent, this weighs very heavy on me. Without any specific guidance throughout this process from our county and state health leaders, I have been left without a critical and valuable resource and put in a very difficult position.

There are many concerns with starting the school year In-Person, especially as we see a rise in positive cases impacting our area. The potential for opening and then closing classrooms and buildings as students and staff go home to quarantine is a significant concern.

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We are also seeing COVID-19 Testing taking several days for results. Local medical experts tell us that this puts school districts in a very challenging position for accurate contact tracing. Anything over a 48-hour turnaround creates a tremendous challenge for identifying the impact on students and staff.

I am not a medical professional. My charge is for the education of our students and well-being of everyone in our schools. Yet, Superintendents and School Boards have been put into a very difficult position to make impossible decisions in a global health crisis. When I look at the data and consider how a statistic converts into a human being, I struggle immensely with applying that concept to define an acceptable rate of loss in our school system, both in terms of student and staff.

We “pilot” many programs and strategies in our district to improve the academic learning of our students. Holly Area Schools is not willing to “pilot” the reopening of schools by bringing over 3,700 students and staff back together for In-Person instruction on August 31st without the adequate support and clear guidance from our state leaders and state health professionals.

At our Board Meeting on August 10th, the Board of Education of Holly Area Schools approved the recommendation to begin the 2020 - 21 school year in a 100% Virtual Learning Plan for all students until October 30th with the option of returning sooner given adequate and appropriate guidance from state health officials.

We understand that this will cause challenges for some of our families. It is important to know that all of us want to be in school. But, we also care about the safety of our students and staff above everything else. We are seeing many school districts in the State and several in Oakland County also moving in this direction.

The details of our Virtual Learning Plan are included in the presentation on our website. The online program is nothing like our spring model. This is a completely new Virtual Learning Program. I encourage you to review the details in our presentation online.

Our goal is to return to an In-Person option for students and parents as soon as possible. We will continue to assess the situation. I have written the Governor’s office and our State Leaders for a clear direction from the Medical and Science Community regarding students returning to school in-person.

We will continue to plan and prepare our student schedules for In-Person Learning. It will be very important for any remaining parents to complete the Skyward Online Verification so we can appropriately plan for our In-Person option when it is announced.

We will continue to communicate updates to our Holly Area Schools families. We appreciate your support and understanding. We know that together as one #BronchosUnited team we will persevere. Our continued strength and partnership will allow our district to overcome this global pandemic that we are facing.

Thank you for all your continued support and understanding.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Roper, Superintendent