Dear Hamilton Community,

Hopefully this email finds you well and wraps up the longest July in the history of Julys. I want to continue to communicate as our return to school plans have been adjusted since my last communication and are based on current conditions and Board of Education decisions. In the coming weeks I will also continue to address our ability to deliver as much face to face learning for our students as possible based on the large number variables we have to consider and account for as we focus on student and staff safety.

On Wednesday evening the Hamilton Board of Education approved two learning plan options to open the 2020-2021 school year. These plans were developed by a team of, at its peak, over 60 teachers, administrators, coaches, staff members, community members, local/state health officials, and experts in the fields of healthcare, engineering and construction management(for space requirements). They've worked tirelessly throughout the summer creating the best possible learning options for your family to choose. In addition, we look forward to having you - our parents, guardians and community - as partners. Plans are based on Michigan's Return-to-School Roadmap and will provide an education that keeps our kids learning at the high-level expected from a Hamilton education, while prioritizing the health and well-being of our students and employees.

Learning Options for Fall 2020

Based on the Governor's Return to School Roadmap, each school district is asked to consider how instruction will be delivered within six different phases. Phases 1-3 of the Return to School Roadmap require fully remote learning. Currently, our region is in Phase 4 of the plan, which allows for in-person instruction with required and highly recommended safety precautions.

Hamilton Community Schools will begin the year (August 26 - October 5) with two learning options: the Hybrid Plan and our Teacher-Paced Remote Plan. Both models use Hamilton Community Schools approved curriculum and Hamilton Community Schools' teachers to deliver instruction. Next week you will be asked to choose the best option for each student in your family. A survey to collect the choice for your child(ren) will be sent on Monday, Aug. 3 with a return date of Friday, Aug. 7.

Please read the following overviews carefully as there are slight adjustments to the plan that I previewed last week. Use the following links to review each plan:

Hybrid Model Overview

Teacher-Paced Remote Model Overview

How will we improve on last year's remote learning and supplement our HYBRID plan to address the remote learning days? The answer is Canvas.

So, what is Canvas?

Canvas is replacing the use of Google Classroom. It is a user-friendly course management system that supports online learning and teaching. Students will be interacting in an online learning environment that is uniquely customized by each teacher with Hamilton Community Schools approved curriculum. Hamilton teachers can post grades, information, assignments, and assessments online with one home base.

Canvas offers a plethora of resources to help students learn, practice, communicate, collaborate, share, and grow. In addition, Canvas is an active spot for school-home connection and communication. Canvas is being used by colleges and schools all over the world. To learn more about the tools and features available to parents in the Canvas parent app, click HERE.

Next Steps

All families must select how each of their student(s) will return to school, choosing either the Hybrid (Face to Face and Virtual Days) Plan or the Teacher Paced Remote Plan, committing to six weeks of learning with your selection. As mentioned above a district communication and survey will be sent out the week of August 3rd for families to make their choice.

It is important for me to share that while we chose not to send a survey on the plan I shared last week we received enough email, phone and in-person feedback to know our district is divided in response to how we should start the 2020-21 school year. It is also important to note that a majority of our families, teachers, administrators and Board of Education want our students back with our teachers as much as possible. We reviewed all of that input and adjusted the plan accordingly. Instead of the original recommendation to stay in the HYBRID model for the duration of Phase 4 we are going to open the year in the HYBRID model and monitor COVID cases or lack thereof in the district as well as in our surrounding counties that choose to return with a full face to face model. The plan approved by the Board of Education included the following information that is important to note and share with you today.

- Hybrid Plans
    - Allegan Public Schools - 2 days/week, 2 cohorts, all grades
    - Plainwell Public Schools - 2 days/week, 2 cohorts, all grades
    - Otsego - 2 days/week, 2 cohorts, all grades
    - South Haven
    - East GR
    - Northview (details not yet released)
    - Birmingham Public Schools
    - Caledonia Community Schools
- 100% Face-to-Face Plans
    - West Ottawa (also offering virtual option)

        - Holland (also offering virtual option)
        - Hudsonville (also offering virtual option)
        - Allendale (also offering virtual option)
        - Saugatuck
        - Thorneapple Kellogg
        - Fennville (also offering virtual option)
        - Spring Lake (also offering virtual option)
- 100% Remote Plans
        - Grand Rapids Public Schools
        - Muskegon Public Schools
        - Waverly
        - East Lansing
        - Okemos
        - Lansing Central School District
        - Ann Arbor
        - Kent School District

As we plan to move to a full return to face to face for all students in all grades five days a week we also have to share that we will follow the timeline below and LOCAL COVID case data will be used as outlined.

- Sept. 21, 2020 - Date to reassess and survey stakeholders
- Sept. 28, 2020 - Transition decision date - decision based on data outlined below.
- Oct. 5, 2020 - Transition to a different model, if safe, based on the data sources below.
- Data to be used:
        - COVID spread rate/percentages
                - County(Allegan and Ottawa) data
                - Hospital (Holland/Zeeland/Allegan) data
                - Hamilton Community Schools student data (Covid rate, quarantine rate)
                - Covid rate of students in nearby schools
                - Quarantine rate of students in nearby schools
        - Stakeholder feedback survey.
                - Parents
                - Teachers
                - Students

Our plan will be updated as new guidance from the Michigan Department of Education, Governor's Office, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the county health department, and other public health officials is received. All updates will be posted on our website and shared with families and employees.

We appreciate your understanding as we navigate these challenging times together. Please know that we are doing all we can to meet as many needs as possible. There isn't a perfect plan during these uncertain times. We care deeply about each of your children and look forward to the opportunity to see them soon. It is my sincere hope that while there are many things in today's society that divide people we can look at our next steps through a frame of understanding. Understanding that each family and school employee stares into the face of a pandemic with different questions, fears, strengths and supports. If we understand that those different views aren't right or wrong and trust that we have and will continue to do all we can to get through this TOGETHER our children WILL come out stronger and more resilient. And as adults we might be able to truly see each other and focus on those things that unite us versus divide us. If our COMMUNITY school can't do that, who in this world can? I appreciate all of you and the feedback you have and will continue to provide us.

Sincerely,

David Tebo, Superintendent