

Dear Merrimack Families~

In the nearly two weeks since we first presented Merrimack's *Plan for Reopening* our many District teams have been hard at work addressing the many details that must be considered as part of any complete and responsible reopening plan. This work has included:

- Continued development of safety protocols for students, teachers and all staff
- Continued development of curriculum and assessment plans and protocols for the delivery of instruction in both an on location and remote setting
- Determining class schedules/student to teacher assignments etc. based on survey results (fully remote or hybrid)
- Determining/building transportation schedules based on survey results (fully remote or hybrid)
- Determining lunch and recess protocols to maximize safety while preserving some normalcy in the school day

These are just some of the many detail laden issues that our District teams have been addressing, and will continue to address, over the coming weeks. As we stated at the School Board meeting on July 13<sup>th</sup> while we certainly would like to have all details sorted out and addressed in order to provide our students, staff and families with much needed clarity, there are just far too many important things still to be worked on to do so at this time, and given the importance of these issues, I am sure you will understand the importance of getting these things right and not rushed just in order to provide an answer that, if rushed, may have to be significantly altered as time and different factors combine to alter the future we are planning for as best we can.

I do wish to address a few items of some significance now that, we hope, will be helpful to you all.

First, on Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, I will be joined by Assistant Superintendents Fabrizio and Shevenell as we host a Virtual Town Hall meeting to address some of the many questions that you have pertaining to school reopening in Merrimack. The Virtual Town Hall will begin promptly at 6:30 PM and will conclude promptly at 8:00 PM. We will provide the community with access information to the Virtual Town Hall early next week.

Second, since it is absolutely vital that we understand the numbers of students who will elect our fully remote option or our hybrid model option we issued a survey asking parents to provide us with their initial choice in this matter. We recognize that in many cases this has been a very hard decision given our inability, at this time, to answer all of your questions. However, like so much about this terribly challenging

situation, we face a crossroads. On the one hand, the District is in need of this data in order to develop the plans that will provide you with the important detail that is necessary for you to make an informed decision. But on the other hand you cannot make an informed decision without some of that necessary detail. I do not know how to resolve this paradox except to reiterate the following: Inasmuch as the District requires your flexibility in order for us to be successful serving your children during whatever lies ahead as schools reopen, the District must equally be flexible with the changing needs and circumstances of families. Therefore, if you have already answered the survey, please understand that your initial answers **DO NOT LOCK YOU INTO THIS RESPONSE FOREVER**. We anticipate that you can, and likely will, have to make changes to your remote/hybrid decision as data and circumstances change and the District will do all it can to accommodate these requests. For now, however, it is essential that we gather initial data from our families to finalize some very important preliminary details relative to teacher scheduling and the like.

Third, *next week the District will reissue the parent survey* regarding preferences for hybrid or on remote learning in order to provide time for those who did not answer the original survey to do so. We respectfully ask you to please answer the survey to the best of your ability now, so that the District can continue to plan for important next steps in our reopening process. Even in the likely event that these initial answers will change, we must have a baseline now in order to move forward with our planning. In the spirit of community partnership, I look forward to receiving the remainder of family responses to our survey when it is reissued next week.

We understand that these are very challenging times for families, students and staff. These are difficult times for us too, as we attempt to put together a school reopening plan under conditions like no one in our lifetimes have had to develop. There are no easy answers, and no answers fast enough or obvious enough for any of us to be comfortable. We truly are in this together.

We thank you for your patience and understanding and for joining with the District in a spirit of partnership to do what is best for the safety of our students and staff as we seek to provide the best education we can to our students in these extraordinary times.

Thank you and stay well.

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent

