ROMEO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

July 31, 2020

RCS Staff, Parents and Families,

I am reaching out with an update as we head into the final month of summer break. This has certainly been quite a different summer than those in the past but I hope that your family is enjoying some rest and relaxation along with a chance for vacation time away. This communication will be the first in a series of important communications over the next few weeks in regard to our plans for opening the 2020-21 school year. I appreciate your patience and support as school planning efforts in the midst of the ever changing status of the COVID-19 pandemic are very challenging. Our planning efforts for Romeo Community Schools continue to follow the requirements set forth by the MI Safe School Roadmap to reopening schools and Executive Order 2020-142.

Over the past three weeks the Superintendents from the 21 school districts in Macomb County worked diligently with the leadership team from the Macomb Intermediate School District to develop the Macomb County COVID-19 Preparedness Plan template. This collaborative effort included several consultations with the leadership of the Macomb County Health Department, Office of Emergency Management and Office of the County Executive. The team of educational leaders who have developed this model plan represent over 500 years of school and district leadership experience. I ask that our school community trust that this plan is comprehensive and supports the best interests of staff, students and families. All 21 school districts are working from this common plan as it relates to the required protocols specifically for Phase 4 and Phase 5 of the state's reopening plan in the areas of Operations, Safety, Social Emotional Supports and Instruction. This past Tuesday the approved template was turned over to Superintendents to work with their Board of Education, planning teams, and stakeholders to integrate local implementation strategies and needs. We are required to have our board approved plan submitted to the MISD by August 15th.

Our district's three **Return to Learn Task Force** teams (Operations and Safety, Instruction, and Mental & Social-Emotional Supports) have been working through the plan this past week and the Board of Education held a Workshop Meeting this past Wednesday to review it. We are on timeline for our board to approve our plan at the August 10th Regular Meeting. Over the course of the next week it is our intent to share an overview of the preparedness plan template as it pertains to health, safety and operations with you. We know this information is vital to parents choosing a learning option for their child(ren) to start this school year. It is important for everyone to understand that health and safety protocols need to be understood but they are not up for lengthy debate. We are committed to supporting parents making an informed decision on the best learning option for their child based on health and safety protocols. We are also very mindful of the seriousness and emotion behind this critical decision.

Our district **Instructional Task Force** will be publishing a second update for parents on the learning options that were originally communicated to you via email on July 20th. The options have not changed. The update will include the FAQ from the parent forums that were held last week, access to a video recording of the presentation and some additional information to guide parents in making a choice of which Romeo Return to Learn option is best for their child(ren) to start this school year. The task force is working through possible partial and modified attendance options that may be necessary to support health and safety for the beginning of this school year. This type of detail is not included in our preparedness plan but will be clearly communicated through the Romeo RTL Roadmap plan that we are developing in conjunction with the state required plan. This is the document that will detail what parents and staff want to know but it will be a byproduct of the planning process, up to date information on COVID-19, and the board's approval of our RCS Preparedness Plan.

So you ask, “Where does that leave us now and how does this all play out over the next three weeks? Great question! Here is an overview of what we plan for the weeks leading up to the start of the 2020-21 school year.

Two important documents:

RCS COVID-19 Preparedness Plan- Board approved plan that outlines requirements in 23 areas specific to Operations, Safety Protocols, Instruction, and Mental & Social-Emotional Health. This is the plan mentioned above that the task force teams and Board are currently reviewing. This will be approved on Monday, August 10th.
**Posted on August 11th to the COVID-19 webpage.*

Romeo “Return to Learn” (RTL) Roadmap- This will take the Preparedness Plan and define local implementation strategies and details (ie. hybrid attendance schedule (if needed), grade level practices, transportation details, modified dismissal/arrive procedures, etc.) This document will be updated with additional information all the way through the start of school. **This will be shared no later than Monday, August 17th.*

Additional Communication and Opportunities for Engagement: *(Documentation that is forthcoming, sharing feedback, Q and A)*

School Messenger updates- Look for weekly email communications throughout August.

*Health and Safety Overview and FAQ no later than August 6th
*Instruction Update #2 no later than August 5th
*Mental & Social-Emotional Supports Update no later than August 10th
*School level communications will resume after August 11th as needed

COVID-19 page- This page on the district website has been updated for the new school year and all information will be posted here.

District “Contact Us” forum- Share questions, comments, concerns through this electronic forum on the homepage.

Parent Forums- Operations Task Force will be holding a forum for each level (Elem, MS, HS) to clarify the requirements in the Preparedness Plan once approved.

Staff Updates and Forums- Our Task Force leaders will be working with our associations to offer staff informational sessions and/or forums designed for grade levels (Elem, MS, HS) and specific employee groups to clarify the requirements and local implementation strategies.

Parent Commitment to a “RTL Learning Option”:

Registration Gateway- The district has included a new form (page) in the annual “registration gateway process” to share your decision on a learning option for each student. This form also includes a question about the intent to utilize RCS Transportation to and from school. **The window to declare your option will open on August 11th and should be completed no later than August 17th.*

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Other important updates:

Survey and Parent input- Thank you to our parents and staff who responded to the district's surveys on returning to school last June. The responses we received have been included in our planning efforts. Due to the current status of the pandemic, we do not believe an additional district wide survey is needed. We will use the feedback from our recent parent forums that had considerable participation and gave us plenty of feedback and questions on both instruction, health and safety concerns. Additionally, we will rely on continued two-way communications to monitor parent input.

2020-21 District Calendar - We are pleased to announce that we have reached agreement with the Romeo Education Association on a calendar for this school year. Although we may experience modifications to what in person schooling and attendance looks like this year due to the pandemic, it is critical that we follow an official calendar. Please see the attached 2020-21 RCS District Calendar. This has also been posted on the district website. School will begin for students on Monday, August 31st.

RCS 2020-2021 District Calendar

These continue to be some very trying times for all of us, but I remain confident that we will arrive at a comprehensive plan for the start of this school year that supports health, safety, and instruction to the best extent possible. It is critical that we have a plan that offers choice to our parents based on the needs of your child(ren) and family. Our plans must be fluid and flexible to support any changes in the state's phased reopening and any confirmed cases of COVID-19 that we experience in our schools. We will do all we can for our students and each other. Thanks for your continued support as we navigate this… TOGETHER!

Go Bulldogs!

Todd R. Robinson, EdD.
Superintendent