

October 29, 2020

Dear Parents and Staff,

I hope you are doing well. The following are two important updates for your review:

Delay in Return to School for Grades 7-12

As you know, we continue to monitor closely the COVID cases in Newtown, Fairfield County, and across the State of Connecticut. Data from the CT Department of Public Health, including rising cases in the Newtown community, have led to recent concerns. We have determined that delaying a full return to school for Grades 7-12 is in the best interest of all students, staff, and families at this time. Students in Grades 7-12 will remain on hybrid until after the Thanksgiving holiday, with an expected return in full on November 30th. This will give us time to monitor the current spike in cases and to support future decisions. **An updated calendar of A/B cohort days will be sent under separate cover and posted on our website.**

K-6 students will remain in full at this time, including early dismissals on Wednesdays. Students in these grades are better able to cohort than they are in upper grades. Larger populations of students and the movement around buildings present unique challenges for secondary classrooms. While our goal is to bring all students back to participate as in-person learners, our top priority is the health and safety of our school community.

Snow Days and Remote Learning

On October 7th, the Connecticut State Board of Education approved flexibility for Superintendents to treat snow days as remote learning days, or to continue to make up snow days later in the school year as we have done in the past. Our administrative team is currently reviewing this new flexibility as well as the challenges it presents – including how to overcome the possibility that families or staff may not have power or Internet service during certain storms. We would also need to be sure that students have access to their devices at home during an emergency closing of school.

We are expecting some questionable weather tomorrow (Friday). While it looks more like a combination of rain and slush, if a snow day were to be called in the immediate future, this would be counted as a regular snow day (added to the year). We will be reviewing viable options to implement remote learning in lieu of future snow days as appropriate. The State Department of Education has provided guidance to districts in developing protocols when determining weather-related closures as remote learning days. We will continue to update you as we approach the winter months.

Stay well.

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent