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Delivering Extraordinary Value to Families

Steel Valley School District

District Administrative Offices

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Edward Wehrer
Superintendent

October 28, 2020

Dear Steel Valley Families,

Over the last several weeks, the district's administration and staff have been working together to create an education plan that offers a high-quality education for all students while adhering to the health and safety guidelines issued by public health officials. The number of COVID-19 cases continues to fluctuate throughout our region and state, thus creating a difficult environment in which to plan a year-long educational schedule for our students. The district's administration values the input from our community and we thank you for sharing your thoughts. After analyzing the feedback from our stakeholders, we are adding an asynchronous remote option for students in grades 6-12. That option is explained in greater detail below.

Over the past several weeks, the district has released information about our return to school plan. If the information was not clear, or caused confusion, we sincerely apologize as that was not our intent. In an effort to be as transparent and forthcoming as possible, this letter seeks to clarify specific items that may have caused frustration.

Recap - First Grading Period

The Steel Valley School District has been planning for three different contingencies during the 2020 – 2021 school year. Those three contingencies are:

- Remote learning for all students
- A hybrid plan of remote learning and in-person instruction
- The full resumption of in-person learning for all of our students

Throughout the first nine-week grading period, the district has followed a full, remote-only model of instruction. During this time, staff and students have become well versed in the processes and procedures of remote learning. Moving forward, the district feels quite capable of utilizing remote learning effectively during any closure of school buildings.

The Bridge – Our Hybrid Learning Plan

As educators, we know that our students learn best when they are in physical classrooms engaging with their peers and highly-qualified teachers. However, we also understand that some people have concerns about students returning to school. Recently, our staff and administrators have worked collaboratively to develop a new hybrid plan that will serve as a bridge for our district. This hybrid plan will be in place for 15 school days, during which time our students and staff will become accustomed to the safety procedures that are outlined in our Health and Safety Plan, which can be found on our website.

The hybrid plan will begin on Wednesday, November 4. Under this plan, students with last names that begin with A – L may choose to attend school in-person Monday – Thursday in the

morning, and students with last names that begin with M – Z may choose in-person instruction Monday – Thursday in the afternoon. As another option, students in grades K – 5 may choose synchronous (live) remote-only learning, which also will be grouped into morning and afternoon sessions based on last name, while students in grades 6 – 12 may choose asynchronous remote-only instruction. The asynchronous instruction will be delivered by our teachers; because of that, a student will be able to move between instructional models and be at the same point in the curriculum sequence. The asynchronous instruction in grades 6 – 12 can be accessed at the convenience of those students and their families. For all of our in-person and remote learners, live remote learning will occur on Friday mornings. Additional information about the hybrid plan can be found on our website.

Building mask stamina is an important component of the hybrid plan. The district will work with our students so that they feel comfortable wearing their masks during class while also following social distancing and other COVID-19 mitigation efforts. The district has completed a variety of safety measures to ensure that our buildings are ready for students. A list of those safety measures can be found on our website.

Moving Forward

On Wednesday, November 25, the district will announce whether or not we will return to full in-person learning or to full remote learning after the Thanksgiving break on December 1. To be frank, the course of the pandemic will determine that decision. While the hybrid plan will not continue past November 25, remote-only learning options will continue until the end of the school year.

For both in-person and remote learning, our teachers, paraprofessionals and students will continue to use Google Classroom as the primary learning management system for the organization of curricula, materials and assignments. In-person students will be required to bring their iPads back and forth between school and home every day.

Families may choose their preferred model of instruction for their children on November 4. After the subsequent three weeks of the hybrid plan, families may change their choice on December 1. Otherwise, changing the choice of instructional model can occur only on the first day of a nine-week grading period.

During this very unusual school year, planning for the future, even a few weeks in advance, has proven to be a tremendous challenge. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and even the best-laid plans can be changed at a moment's notice. While there have certainly been some bumps in the road these last few weeks, please know that your school district, including members of the staff, administration and Board of School Directors, have been working together to balance our students' educational needs with the health and safety of all. If you have any questions, please contact the district at 412-464-3600.

Thank you for your continued support and flexibility as we move through these uncertain times together.

Sincerely,

Edward Wehrer

Edward Wehrer
Superintendent