



April 16, 2021

Hello Dallas Students, Families and Staff Members,

I know there is a lot of information coming from schools as we head further into spring. Thank you for understanding the importance of keeping you informed. This letter is a bit long but it contains the most recent information about our continued efforts across the district.

Hybrid learning for the remainder of the school year. All school sites in DSD will be operating in a hybrid model by next Tuesday. This has been a heavy and unprecedented lift for all our staff members, and I thank them for making it happen. Dallas Virtual Academy (distance learning) will also continue for the remainder of the year.

Earlier this week I shared with the Dallas School Board that hybrid learning will be used for the remainder of this school year. The recent Governor's order, which changed student spacing from 6' to 3', provides an opportunity for bringing more students into our schools. However, I believe use of our hybrid model currently supports our students the best. Here is the reasoning I shared with the board:

- COVID case numbers have risen sharply since early March. Polk County case numbers reached 189 (per 100,000 people) last week, up from 72 just three weeks earlier. We anticipate this number to rise in the near future. Since April 5, we have had six new COVID cases in the school district and a few exposures away from our schools, resulting in over 80 student/staff exclusions from on-site learning/participation during the past 10 days.
- This would require **another** significant adjustment for students, parents and staff members. One week (or more) of planning time would be required for staff members to prepare for this change. Distance learning would be required for all students during this time. We estimate the hiring of an additional 25 temporary/substitute employees to implement this change district wide. We hired 33 new employees since March 1 for our hybrid model and we would be challenged to fill these new positions in a short period. Three temporary teachers would be needed at Oakdale Heights Elementary School resulting in 45 current students receiving a new teacher for the last few weeks of the school year. We owe parents the opportunity to ask if a full return would change the decision for their child to attend in person or not. This would require additional time, a new survey, and the results may then restrict our ability to offer this option at all.

Andy Bellando, Superintendent

Board of Directors: Michael Blanchard • Michael Bollman • Dave Hunt • Matt Posey • Jonathan Woods

- Our bus system is maxed out and all buses/drivers are being used. We are already transporting students at 3' distance, as allowed, and doubling the transportation capacity would be significantly problematic.
- I am concerned about equitable access by all students. This change would require time for finding solutions for students who would not have equitable access using this model.

Individual board members shared their agreement with this decision. They also clearly stated the importance of full reopening of schools in the fall. I agree. **Dallas School District students will be returning full time in the fall and the board-approved calendar for the 2021-22 school year reflects this reality.** The calendar will be placed on the district web site next week.

State Assessment -- I recently shared with you that our students would participate in the state assessments this spring. After discussions with many staff members and parents, we have now canceled our participation. Our priority is preserving each moment of instruction for the remainder of the school year and this decision will support that priority. We will still provide a testing option for any parent requesting it for their child. Please contact your child's school if you are interested.

Summer learning – I am excited to share that we are preparing a lots of enrichment, academic support and care and connection opportunities for all DSD students, grades K-12 this summer. Parents will receive a short interest survey next week. Please be certain to complete the survey, as it will guide our planning and staffing efforts. More detail to come soon on this topic.

As always, please contact me if you have questions or if you would like to discuss our efforts in Dallas School district. andy.bellando@dsd2.org

Andy Bellando
Superintendent