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Eau Claire Public Schools ~ 6190 West Main Street ~ Eau Claire, Michigan ~ 49111

August 2, 2020

Dear Friends and Families of Eau Claire Public Schools,

Good morning! I want to start by thanking everyone for their patience throughout this entire pandemic (and it's not over yet). This past spring was anything but typical for our school community. COVID-19 forced us to create remote learning plans overnight, deliver instruction in new and unique ways (sometimes without access to technology), and maintain a sense of family while being socially distant. On behalf of everyone at Eau Claire Public Schools, I commend you for coming together during this challenging time. It is clear that when we work together, our students, our families, and our communities thrive.

Earlier in July, I released a brief [update](#) about our Return to Learning plans. Thanks to guidance from other local Districts, Berrien RESA, the Berrien County Health Department, and input from stakeholders through surveys, the ECPS Plan - is nearly complete. Once again, I am asking that we all come together during this challenging time and work together in the best interest of our students, staff, and families of Eau Claire Public Schools. The ECPS Plan you are about to review was thoughtfully drafted in collaboration by District planning teams made up of teachers, administrators, and other support staff. Please understand that this a living document, and as new information and resources are shared, the plan will be updated accordingly. The plan (in its most current version) will also be housed on the Eau Claire homepage. Our goal is to use the most up to date information and best practices to keep students and staff safe while offering the most beneficial instruction possible.

We realize that there are many opinions in regards to what schools should do in the fall. Unfortunately, we will not be able to make everyone happy. As additional public health data becomes available, we know that we will need to be prepared to adjust the course. The safety and well-being of our students, staff, and families remain our priority. The high degree of complexity that the current environment presents is extensive. From transportation to food service, to classroom instruction, maintenance, and custodial operations, to serving special populations, our district's task force has been working nonstop to approach these needs with great care and resolve. Pursuing our vision for in-person instruction will require our creativity, patience, cooperation, and understanding. What we do hope to offer is options. Options that will allow every family to choose what is best for their situation. As you review the ECPS plan, please keep in mind that instruction will look different than it did before March 13, 2020. We must re-imagine every aspect of our day in this new environment. Additionally, we are waiting on a few final instructions from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Departments from across the state are developing standard statewide guidance on exposure and what happens next.

The plan is linked below for your review. As you read through this document, we ask you to make a note of things you are **“E”xcited** about and things you are **“C”oncerned** with. We also ask that you think about your plans for the fall. If you feel you are going to choose Option #2 (100% virtual) and would like to enroll in our ECPS Virtual Academy, we have a stringent deadline of **August 14, 2020**.

[ECPS Return to Learning Fall 2020 Reopening Plans](#)

We expect that many families and students will have questions about the plan. To help address your concerns, we have also created a ***Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document*** to provide further guidance. Then on August 5, 2020, we would like to invite you to a Virtual Town Hall Meeting.

*****Join us on August 5, 2020, for a Virtual Town Hall Meeting*****

On August 5, 2020, at 4:00 p.m., our Building Administrators will be hosting a Town Hall Meeting where they will be virtually presenting the ECPS plan and how it will look in our buildings in more detail. Following the Town Hall Meeting, you will be provided a link to our **Talk2Us** Survey. This survey will allow you the opportunity to share what you are **“E”xcited** about and what you are **“C”oncerned** about. Additionally, you will be able to tell us what *Option* you are considering for the fall. An application will be sent to all families who choose Option #2 in the **Talk2Us** Survey.

Lastly, before moving to distance learning in March of this year, many discussions took place in Eau Claire and other Berrien County school districts about a possible move to a pre-Labor Day start for school in the fall of 2020. The District looked at several options and weighed the pros and cons of each. Then came COVID-19 and the move to at-home learning.

As part of our Return to Learning work, we have determined that the move to a pre-Labor Day start made the most sense for the coming fall. Additionally, a vast majority of Berrien County districts have made a move to a pre-Labor Day start for 2020-2021. Aligning our calendar with the other county districts, allows us to better align our programs where we share students, such as Career Technical Education (CTE) and Special Education. With that in mind, the first day of school for Eau Claire Public Schools students will be August 31, 2020.

[Click here for the Approved 2020-2021 Calendar.](#)

A trusted mentor of mine (Dave Gray) once told me to always keep the main thing the main thing. Public education is always about our children. We are fortunate to have a team of dedicated teachers, administrators, and staff members who genuinely love our students and will do all they can to keep them safe. The support of our families and the community, especially during this particular time, is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ann =)

Ann Marie Shell
Superintendent

Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow.