



Rochester City School District

RCSD REOPENS



Dear Colleagues,

At the end of last month, we shared our plan to reopen RCSD schools. Since that time, we have been deliberating the best way to ensure that all our students receive access to high-quality grade-level instruction in the safest way possible. We have also been listening to feedback from parents, teachers, staff, and community members who have expressed concerns over the continued spread of COVID-19.

Last week, Governor Cuomo announced that levels of COVID-19 are low enough to open schools in New York State. Since then, the District has revisited all three of the learning models outlined in our reopening plan – in-person, remote, and a hybrid model of both.

After careful consideration of the Governor’s expectations around testing and contact tracing, particularly the additional planning with the Health Department that will be needed, and the input we received from the Rochester community and the experiences of other urban districts around the country, at this time **the District has elected to utilize the remote learning model for all grade levels during the first ten weeks of school.** This decision was made out of an abundance of caution to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. We will continue to re-evaluate remote learning throughout the first ten weeks of school.

When contemplating which learning model to utilize, the District considered several factors, especially in an urban district of our size. Most notably, the CDC has indicated there is increasing evidence that some racial and ethnic minority groups are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. We also listened to feedback from employees and families, with many parents and caregivers choosing the remote learning option over the hybrid model of learning. Moving forward, we will continue to monitor key indicators, including the number of cases, testing capacity, and indication of community spread, to determine if we can shift back to in-person learning, where we hope to return our students to school after the first ten weeks.

Additionally, we are working to adjust the first day of school for students to accommodate for four days of professional development for school staff. We hope to have the previously scheduled Superintendent’s Conference Days throughout the year to take place Tuesday, September 8 through Friday, September 11, with the first day of school for students occurring on Monday, September 14. The District is holding a virtual employee session on Monday, August 17, from 9:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. via zoom.

As we continue to prepare for remote learning, additional details will be shared in the coming weeks. Please check your District email and the website at www.rcsdk12.org/reopens for regular updates throughout the summer. In the meantime, please review the health and safety measures in place for all RCSD employees prior to the start of school:

- Employees are required to wear a cloth face covering when they are not able to social distance at six feet apart. The District is providing two cloth masks to each employee.
- Employees and visitors are required to complete a daily health screening assessment electronically prior to or immediately upon arrival to work. The electronic assessment can be done at home via a daily email link (Daily Health Questionnaire) or at a kiosk onsite. This includes taking your temperature each day.

I recognize that there are pros and cons to each plan, and no plan will please everyone. We are using this time to fortify our remote learning plan, maximize instructional interactions between teachers and students, and leverage community resources. Thank you for your dedication in helping us keep our schools and our children safe and healthy as we navigate a reality that none of us could have ever imagined. Please stay safe and check in on each other; you never know the difference a meaningful interaction can make.

Sincerely,

Lesli Myers-Small, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools