

August 13, 2020

Dear Students and Families of the Rochester City School District,

At the end of last month, we shared our plan to reopen Rochester 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 been listening to feedback from parents, teachers, staff, and community members who have expressed concern 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.

While this is not an easy decision to make, ***we have decided that all Rochester students will begin the school year in September under a remote learning model and not the hybrid model we originally proposed.*** We carefully considered 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.

This decision was made in close collaboration with our school leaders and with the support of local health officials. We know that being in the classroom is the best way to support the whole child and help our students grow; however, we are listening to the advice of medical experts, and the reality is that there are still concerns about having large numbers of students in small-contained spaces. While we understand that remote learning is not easy, we are confident that our teachers, administrators, and support staff will continue to work hard to ensure that your children have the materials and supports necessary to be successful.

The health and well-being of our students, teachers, staff, and their families is our top priority, and we are committed to doing our part to help Rochester get back on track and keep our students and educators healthy. Moving forward, we will continue to monitor key indicators, including the number of cases, testing capacity,



Rochester City School District

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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.

We are working to adjust the start of the school year with our staff members, and we plan to have the first day of school for students occurring on September 14.

In the meantime, RCSD is holding five virtual parent sessions that will focus on health and safety measures in our schools and how learning will take place. I hope you can join us for one of these sessions, which begin on Saturday, August 15, and run through Friday, August 21. Please visit www.rcsdk12.org/reopens for dates, times, and zoom links.

Together, we will navigate through this school year to ensure that high-quality learning takes place for all students in a fair and equitable way. Thank you for your continued support, patience, and partnership.

Sincerely,

Lesli Myers-Small, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools