

Sullivan West Central School District

33 Schoolhouse Road, Jeffersonville, New York 12748 • Tel (845) 482-4610 x3000 Fax (845) 482-3022

Stephen A. Walker
Superintendent of Schools



August 4, 2020

Dear Bulldog Families:

This letter is in follow-up to the communication you received on July 22 which outlined our plans for the re-opening of our school buildings in the fall. Since that letter was distributed, many of you have made time to share with me your reaction to our plans, and I thank you for doing so. Your reactions have ranged from appreciation to aggravation, and I am working to make sure that all of your emails are responded to. We will also be creating a “Frequently Asked Questions” document, which will be regularly updated, to communicate responses to those questions.

Our District’s plan to re-open our schools is in response to requirements from the Department of Health and the New York State Education Department which include that social distancing (6 feet of distance or more) must take place in our schools. Given that requirement, there is no way for all of our 1100 students and 200 staff members to be physically together in our schools on a daily basis. As a result, our plan creates a “hybrid” schedule, which was described in the July 22 communication. We recognize the significant challenge this places on many of our families with regard to childcare, and unfortunately, we simply do not have a way to alleviate that challenge for you. However, we are trying to provide as many options as possible for our families, and some of these options are detailed below.

Later this week, Governor Cuomo is expected to make his announcement as to whether schools will be able to open for in-person instruction in the fall. As we await his announcement, I want to share some additional details with you about our plan, and I ask that you review them carefully.

Hybrid Schedule Details:

- Students will attend school two days per week – either Monday/Tuesday (“Group A”) or Thursday/Friday (“Group B”), and will receive at-home learning the other 3 days of the week.
- Siblings are being planned to attend their in-person school days together.
- If parents have a preference as to whether their child(ren) attends school on Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday, please express your preference by emailing Jackie Peters (petersjac@swcsd.org) at the Elementary School and/or Mark Plescia (plesciamar@swcsd.org) by the end of the day this Thursday, August 6. We will do all that we can to accommodate these requests.
- It is our goal to inform parents of their child(ren)’s schedule of in-person attendance (whether they are in “Group A” or “Group B”) by the middle of this month.

“...enriching the lives of all students”

Full-Time At-Home Learning:

- If parents prefer that their child(ren) receive daily at-home learning as opposed to receiving any in-person instruction, please communicate that to me directly via email (walkerste@swcsd.org) by Friday, August 14.
- Parents who choose this option for their child(ren) will be making this selection for at least the first quarter of the school year. In order to provide for instructional continuity and the safety and design of our classrooms and bus routes, students whose parents request for them to receive full-time at-home learning will remain full-time at-home learners at least through Friday, November 13.

Transportation:

- Bus routes are being developed based on prioritizing siblings to attend school in-person on the same days and to ensure that social distancing occurs as required by New York State on each bus run.
- Students will be required to wear masks while on the bus. This is a requirement from the New York State Education Department.
- If your child(ren) normally ride our school bus, but you are not comfortable having your child ride our bus in the fall and instead will be providing separate transportation for your child(ren) on their scheduled days of in-person instruction, please contact Jessica Franke at frankejes@swcsd.org by Friday, August 14, so that we can schedule our bus routes accordingly.

Daily Schedule:

- In order to provide time each day for our teachers and staff to provide support to our at-home learners, the plan is for students to be dismissed one-hour earlier than the normally scheduled day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Dismissal times for students on those days are planned to be as follows:
 - Elementary School: approximately 2:30 pm
 - High School: approximately 1:22 pm

The final hour of each day at both schools (1:22 pm – 2:22 pm at the High School, and 2:35 pm – 3:35 pm at the Elementary) will be time that teachers and staff will be providing instructional support to all at-home learning students, including synchronous (Zoom) and asynchronous (Schoology, etc.) learning opportunities.

Despite the best efforts of many, the at-home learning that was provided this past spring was inconsistent in many cases and caused feelings of frustration for many of our students, families, and staff members. Given the opportunity to plan for what this school year may bring, we anticipate that at-home learning for our students in the 2020-2021 school year will be significantly improved. In order to provide for further professional development time for our staff to prepare for these new challenges, I will be recommending to the Board of Education that the School District calendar be changed, so that Tuesday, September 8 and Wednesday, September 9 become Superintendent's Conference Days. These days will be used for staff training on health and safety procedures, classroom design to provide for social distancing, and at-home learning strategies. This change would mean that the first day of school for students would be Thursday, September 10.

As we await a final decision from the Governor later this week, our plan remains subject to change, and it will continue to be subject to change as we begin the new school year. I know that this is difficult and frustrating for many of you; it is for us as well. However, we will continue to make decisions based upon the regulations we

“...enriching the lives of all students”

are given, prioritizing health and safety of all students and staff and the education we know our students deserve.

We will share more information soon.

Please stay well, Bulldogs.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Walker
Superintendent of Schools

“...enriching the lives of all students”