July 24, 2020

Okemos Community-

Last night the Board of Education voted to adopt the recommended 100% online model when we are in Phase 4 of the MI Safe Start plan. The district will remain in this model through the end of the first quarter, October 30th, regardless of the MI Safe Start Plan phase. Should we shift back to Phases 1-3, online instruction will continue with reduced access to our facilities. Should we shift to Phase 5, dependent on the timing of the change and local considerations, we will move towards in person instruction in our buildings. A transition period of 2-3 weeks will be necessary to bring students and staff back to in person instruction safely and to adjust staffing. If you would like to review the presentation for greater detail about last evening’s meeting, it is posted on our website here. Thank you to the many community members who shared diverse perspectives regarding the proposals last evening.

Our online programming will be more rigorous than what was offered last year, and will include a balance of live in person instruction, small group instruction, class discussions and independent practice. Attendance, grading and teacher feedback will be additional components in our online program this year. We also understand that a level of flexibility will be needed to accommodate circumstances faced by our families and students during a very challenging time.

With regard to special education students with IEPs, the district administration and special education department will collaborate with parents/guardians and staff to systematically review student programs on an individualized basis to ensure contingency plans are in place for those students.

We acknowledge the hardships that this difficult decision may cause our students, families and staff, and know there are many questions each of you have as we plan to move forward. On Wednesday, August 13th, the district will release a more detailed plan which will include sample schedules and additional details by level. In addition, a tool is being created to collect “Frequently Asked Questions.” FAQs will be compiled, and responses will be posted on our website.

These are difficult times for our community. We yearn for a return to normalcy. I have great confidence in the staff of the Okemos Schools and in our broader community to rise to this challenge together and to support each other as we provide meaningful educational experiences for students in an environment that best promotes safety. I am hopeful that by taking these difficult steps now, our return to a more normal way of life can be realized sooner for us all.

Most sincerely-

John J. Hood
Superintendent