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August 3, 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Community,

We are fast approaching the start of school, therefore, we would like to give you an update of where we are at with all the things happening here at school. Custodians, teachers and administrators have been working hard to get classrooms laid out and set up with things in place in the new rooms all summer long. We have been fortunate to have various groups of student athletes volunteer their time to help with all kinds of projects across campus this summer. We have a few updates to get out to you as there are so many things happening around the school.

We will be sending out information in August about our new classrooms and buildings. We will share where students and parents will enter for the upcoming year. We welcome back volunteers in the elementary so please remember all volunteers need to have background checks and fingerprints done before volunteering.

Our first day of school for 1st – 6th and 9th graders is September 7th and the first day for grades 7, 8 and 10-12 will be September 8th. This will allow for 6th grade students and Freshman to have an orientation day where they will be the only ones in the school building. This has helped them settle in the new buildings before the rest of the student body arrives. Kindergarteners will be given an individual time to come in and meet the teachers, do some short assessments and put items away on September 7th or 8th. Families will be told when their scheduled times are in advance, please be looking for that information after August 13th.

We are excited to be moving forward with our fall sports programs and games as normal. We welcome fans to our events this year! High School practices start on August 13th and MS practices start on August 23rd. Please remember that all paperwork, physicals and fees need to be taken care of prior to the first day of practice. Any updates or changes to this information will be sent out as soon as possible to get you the most up to date information. We have parent meetings scheduled for fall sports. The schedule is as follows:

- High School Volleyball Parent Meeting- Thursday, August 12 at 6 PM in HS gym.
- High School Football Parent Meeting- Thursday, August 12 at 6 PM in the new weight room.
- High School and Middle School Cross Country Parent Meeting- Thursday, August 5 at 6:30 PM in Mrs. William's old upstairs classroom.

Masks

- As of right now, masks are optional for the upcoming school year within our school buildings. If something changes and that decision changes, we will let families know as soon as possible.
- As of right now, in accordance to President Biden's Executive Order 13998, *Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel*, our school buses are considered a form of public transportation, and therefore, masks will be required on the bus. If this changes, we will let our families know right away.

- If a national, state or county mandate is given to us that schools will be required to wear a mask, then we will have that in place during the mandate.

Remote Learning at Shepherd Schools

- We will not be offering a long-term remote option this year at Shepherd. If you choose to keep your child(ren) home, please register with the county as a homeschool.
- Currently, we have the same quarantine times and as we did last school year. Shepherd Schools will not be contact tracing, that will all be taken back to the county level. In September when we start school, we will follow what the county is mandating in regards to quarantining.
- If your child is *quarantined due to a close contact at school* and is sent home *by the Shepherd school nurse*, there will be an option for remote learning during that time. We will not be offering another form of remote learning for the year. If something changes during the year, where you and your family do not feel it is the best choice to have your children enrolled, you as a parent/guardian can choose to homeschool them through the county at any time.

COVID Testing and Vaccinations

- As for COVID testing and vaccinations, we will not be testing students for COVID-19 on site or administering any COVID-19 vaccinations to students on site. Shepherd Schools feels this is a family choice and we respect the rights of our families to make that personal choice.

Again, as of right now, we have only masks **optional** planned within our *school buildings* and on our *school grounds* for the opening of school in September. We will be implementing layered prevention strategies to keep our students and staff safe. This means we will again be asking families to personally monitor their children's health and help us by choosing to do the right thing by staying home when they are sick. We will distance out students the best we can in the classrooms and other areas of the buildings. We have updated some ventilation around the district and plan to do more as the school year approaches. We will be continuing to use hand sanitizer and advocating good hand hygiene throughout the day. We will continue to clean and disinfect our buildings as we have been to help prevent the spread of germs.

We will have free breakfasts and lunches for all students at school again this year. We will be serving breakfast for students to take and eat during their first class in the morning and we will be serving lunch in our new larger cafeteria facility!

We will be having open house coming up prior to school starting in September. I invite all parents and students to attend and take a look at all the new spaces our students will be learning in this year and for years to come.

I want to thank you for all your patience throughout the last year and half. We are looking forward to the new year and having school feel more like school. We have learned throughout this entire process and have grown to create better ways to do things in education; so it has not all been bad. We will be keeping some of the things we have learned that were better for students and staff. Please feel free to call and talk with your child's building principal if you have any individual questions and concerns as we get closer to school starting.

Having students in school is a priority to us! Again if you have questions, please feel free to get ahold of us or check our website and Facebook page for the most current information.

Sincerely,
Drea O'Donnell
Superintendent

