Duncan School Families, July 1, 2020

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT FAMILIES READ THIS ENTIRE LETTER!**

I would like to reach out to the families in our School District and let you know our plan for school this fall. We will begin school on Wednesday, August 5. Our Teachers will be reaching out to you to set up a classroom visit. Since we are not able to have our “Meat and Greet” activity, and the in-person learning is pushed back to August 17, we feel it is important to begin the year with this Parent/Teacher/Student meeting. These meetings will take place during the first and second full weeks of August as we begin our year with remote learning. With these meetings taking place one student at a time, we will be able to follow the social distancing requirements.

There are a number of key points that I would like to make as we move forward:

* I believe that our children will learn best with the support of a Teacher in the classroom. I am dedicated to doing everything I can to ensure that our school remains open for this in-person instruction. As soon as the State allows us to have in-person instruction, we will!
* I do not believe it is possible to have a group of children keep a face mask on all day! I also believe that if our situation is so dire that we are asking every person in our school to wear a face mask all day long, we probably need to close the school. If any staff member or student feels the need to wear a mask, they are welcomed to do so and will be respected for that decision.
* Beginning remotely and then moving to in-person learning is not our choice, but out of necessity to the situation and guidelines in our State. As we move through these different situations, I assure you that we will do everything possible to make each situation a positive experience for everyone. Our goal remains and will always be to focus on the needs of our students.
* We will be spending a great amount of time, effort and money to ensure that our schools are disinfected and safe for all who enter. I ask that you be understanding of the stricter guidelines we must follow as we protect our students and staff.
* The best way that you can help us this year is:
	+ Don’t come to the school for any reason if you are sick or have been around someone who is sick.
	+ Don’t send your child to school if they are sick. We will have to send them home!!
	+ Don’t give your child medication and then send them to school hoping they will feel better. When you do this, we end up sending them back home.
	+ If your child comes into contact with someone who has COVID-19, keep them home until you can be sure they are not going to become sick.
* Visits to the school should be limited. To ensure the safety of our students and staff, we are asking that you follow these guidelines:
	+ Do not come to the office or school unless it is absolutely necessary.
	+ We will release your child to you if you call from the parking lot. We will verify you are there and then send your child out to you.
	+ Any outside visitor is required to wear a mask to come onto our school campus.
* Our instructional method will vary depending on State guidelines and on the level of community spread of COVID-19. Therefore, we will be offering the following methods of instruction:
1. Normal schooling with students attending in-person. This is our preference if the State allows us to operate this way.
2. Modified schooling with some students attending in-person and other students using remote learning from home. This method will be chosen by the school or a family for a short duration of time or long term. Those at home would be:
	* 1. A student or group of students who need to be quarantined for a short period of time due to illness/contact/exposure to COVID-19. These students may return to school when it is determined it is safe for them to do so.
		2. A student whose family has concerns about possible exposure at school. These students may only return to in-person learning at the beginning of each quarter, ie. October, January and March.
		3. A student who would not be safe during in-person attendance.
3. Remote schooling with all students participating in remote learning from home. This method will be used when school is closed by the State or by an overwhelming community spread of the virus. We will return to in-person learning when the closure is lifted or the spread subsides.
* At home learners will still be required to take our benchmark tests as well as the State Assessment.
* As stated previously, we will begin the school year under method #3. Parents and students need to understand that this scenario will be much different than it was in the Spring. The accountability of students in completing the assignments will be no different than if we were at school. If a student does not complete the work during school closure and method #3, they will not get credit for that class, course or grade level.
* If you plan on keeping your child home and would like to utilize method #3 long term, even after in-person learning is approved by the State. Please notify the school before August 5. Our office secretaries will return to work full-time on July 20.
* **Please update your address, email and phone number for our school records.**

I assure each of you that we will have the best interest of the students in mind as we work within the guidelines we face due to COVID-19. We did not choose this and it is not something we want to have to work through, but we really have no choice. Let’s come through this stronger as a community and stronger as a school.

Respectfully,

D. Eldon Merrell

Superintendent, Duncan Schools