

Dear Columbia Falls School District Families,

I hope this letter finds you enjoying the last days of summer before school starts. We understand that this has been a difficult summer as we all negotiate the Covid-19 pandemic. We have continued to work on our school reopening plan and guidance for the 20-21 school year. This planning has involved a multitude of organizations and individuals. Although this information would have been nice to release weeks ago, it has taken a tremendous amount of meticulous planning and effort. It was important to us to take the time to seek input from our County Health Department, OPI, the Board of Trustees, building administration, staff, community members, MHSA, CDC, and medical professionals in our community. Our staff began planning before school ended last June, and the planning has continued since that time. This complex process continues up to today, as the guidance continues to change almost daily. We know for certain that we will provide high quality education both in person and remotely this year. Finally, we again want to note that this is our proposed plan and that changes may and likely will be made if our situation changes or needs arise.

There are four main topics in this email (District Calendar, Pandemic Operational Guidelines, Parent Survey, and Pandemic Remote Instruction Guidelines) and it is critical for you to read and understand these as you prepare for the school year. It is also important to understand that all of this information is subject to change based on new guidance, recommendations, SD 6 Board action, and directives from state and local authorities.

District Calendar:

At our last school board meeting in July, the Board approved changing the district calendar for the 20-21 school year to accommodate additional time for pandemic operational training, and preparation for the start of the school year.

In summary, the first four days of the school year, August 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28, will be set aside for staff professional development and preparation. There will be no school for students on August 24-27. Monday, August 31, is the first day of school for grades K-12. The district calendar can be found on our district website at: [School District Calendar 20-21](#)

Pandemic Operational Guidelines:

The following guidelines were approved at the School District 6 board meeting on August 10. The Operational Guidelines are designed to assist in planning for the safe operation of Columbia Falls Public Schools. The goal of this document is to help schools plan and implement measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission in the school setting. The document was built based on the input received from a variety of sources which include but are not limited to: Governor's guidance, OPI guidance, CDC guidance, school leaders across the state, the County Health Department, local pediatricians and medical professionals. This document was also developed using available scientific research and data related to COVID-19.

This is a lengthy document that covers a variety of topics with specific requirements, recommendations and considerations for staff, students, and parents.

Our schools face considerable operational constraints that are out of our control. Parents and teachers have a range of perspectives on the reopening of school campuses. To that end, this document reflects the best judgement of Columbia Falls Public Schools as to the practices that our schools should follow while also considering local conditions and considerations. The Pandemic Operational Guidelines can be found here: [Columbia Falls Schools Pandemic Operational Guidelines](#)

Parent Survey

After the school board's approval of our reopening plan it is critical that we get detailed information about students returning to school. As a result, the following survey is very important for our planning in the next several weeks. Please fill out the survey by **Sunday, August 16**. We will use this to plan for our remote learning staffing needs as well as our transportation plans. We ask that you **fill out a survey for each student in the family**. This allows for families to make different choices for individual children in the family. Thank you in advance for your feedback through the survey. [Parent Survey- August 2020](#)

Remote Instruction:

As we continue to deliver educational services to our students, we will provide opportunities for those who choose to learn remotely. From our experience last spring and hearing the input from families and staff members, it was important to build a structure of expectations for this platform. The information pertaining to students who plan to receive remote instruction can be found in the Pandemic Remote Learning Guidelines. [Columbia Falls Pandemic Remote Learning Guidelines](#) The deadline for parents to register for remote learning is Monday, August 17. There will be more information on this aspect of our planning in the near future. Parents should sign up for remote instruction by filling out the following survey. [Remote Learning Registration Form](#) Note: Remote instruction will start on Tuesday, September 8.

On behalf of the central office administration, we are so grateful for the hard work and diligence of all who have helped contribute to our reopening planning. We readily acknowledge that it has been a monumental team effort. There will have to be adjustments and modifications made as we go - there is no such thing as a perfect plan for every scenario and we must remain flexible in our response and seek to problem solve and find solutions. We are confident that the Columbia Falls School District team can make this work by showing our students, parents and community that we are a resourceful, hardworking, compassionate and dedicated team of professional educators.

I am humbled by the grace and generosity of heart, along with the positive perseverance that has been shown to me during my first month as superintendent. Those attributes will serve us well as we start the 20-21 school year.

Sincerely,

Dave Wick Superintendent
School District 6
NAESP Past President

