Dear Fox Chapel Area Family,

We hope this weekly update finds our students, parents, and guardians healthy and well! We know our school community is eager to hear about our plans for the 2020-2021 school year, and we’re sharing as many details as we can as they become available. We ask, however, that you keep in mind that because guidance and recommendations change nearly daily, our plans remain extremely fluid.

Here are some details we’d like to share with you as part of the weekly updates that we promised to send every Wednesday evening.

- All of the workgroups in our Return-to-School Coalition have completed their meetings. This week, the entire Fox Chapel Area School District administrative team is being “debriefed” by the leaders of each workgroup to learn about the recurring themes and concerns that have emerged from the workgroup meetings. That input will be integral in the ongoing compilation of the district’s return-to-school plan, which will be presented to the Fox Chapel Area School Board in the next few weeks.

- The district has completed a draft version of its Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan, which can be viewed on the district’s comprehensive COVID-19 webpage at www.fcasd.edu/coronavirus. This draft may change as we refine our plan or receive additional guidance. Although this is a draft, we wanted to share our current work with you.

- The window to complete the parent/guardian survey that we sent last week is now closed. We thank you for such a robust response! At this time, we are compiling data from the survey to inform our return-to-school plan. I can’t express enough how valuable your input is as we work to create a thorough plan that’s in the best interests of all of our students.

- A staff survey was sent to all Fox Chapel Area employees and is now complete. The data from the survey are being evaluated by the district’s administrative team.

- A number of parents have expressed that they prefer the fully online option for their child/children’s education for 2020-2021 school year, so we are working to expand and further refine our online program, taught by Fox Chapel Area teachers, in a number of ways, such as:
  - Using the best of what we learned in the spring, feedback from students/parents/guardians/staff, discussion in the Return-to-School Coalition workgroups, and the results of piloting strategies and formats in the Summer Learning Academy
  - Carefully blending for students to work directly with teachers, as well as on their own
○ Providing small-group opportunities that include intervention, enrichment, and other support services
○ Focusing on social and emotional learning and support
○ Clearly outlining expectations for learning and assignments
○ Using a consistent and user-friendly online platform
○ Providing print materials and supplies to support student learning
○ Assisting with access to FCASD devices for home use
○ Training and support for students and parents/guardians for success in the online environment
○ Reinforcing a sense of belonging
○ Ensuring continuity of education and developing a transition plan for returning to the classroom should a student resume in-person instruction.

A video highlighting aspects of our fully online educational model will be released in the coming days.

Also, in the coming week, the district’s administrative team will meet to continue to shape our return-to-school plan. Please know that our expectation is that once we get our students into our schools, we want them to stay there! To achieve that, we ask that our entire school community practice the health and safety guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Pennsylvania Department of Health, and Allegheny County Health Department. Parents and guardians can help us in our return-to-school efforts by talking to their students now about safe practices.

Though much uncertainty remains, please know we’re very excited to begin the 2020-2021 school year. While things certainly will look different, our commitment to providing our students with an exemplary education very much remains the same.

Sincerely,

Mary Catherine Reljac, Ed.D.
Superintendent