

July 27, 2020

Dear MVSD Community,

Over the course of the summer, district staff have been working on three different ways to re-open schools this fall. As we think about in-school models or approaches that combine time in-school with remote instruction, we are mindful of the guidance provided by OSPI, the Governor, and the Department of Health. This includes social distancing, face coverings, daily health screenings, and protocols for incidents of COVID exposure that could result in student and/or staff quarantines. We are also mindful of the current public health environment in our community. Unfortunately, it has been worsening during July based on Skagit County Health Department data. Finally, we recognize that remote learning creates hardships for families and leads to inequitable learning opportunities for our students. We know we do our best work and serve our students, families, and community most effectively when we are able to teach children in our schools 100% of the time. Given all of these considerations, we believe the best option to reopen our schools this fall on September 2nd is a model we are referring to as **Mount Vernon's Remote Plus Model for a Safe Start**.

**Mount Vernon's Remote PLUS Model for a Safe Start** means opening schools on September 2nd with a remote learning model **PLUS** a level of "at-school" opportunities for specifically identified students. This would provide targeted students some opportunities for face-to-face instruction with staff. **PLUS** services would support students with special needs, English language learners, kindergartners, and other students "furthest from educational justice". Mount Vernon would remain in this model up to December 18. The status of public health in our community will be monitored and our plan will be modified as appropriate for the second half of the school year.

**The rationale for this plan is as follows:**

- The public health environment in our community is not improving. This leads to restrictive guidance and suggests those restrictions are more likely to increase rather than decrease in the foreseeable future.
- With any "at school" model it is very likely that we will quickly have staff and student cohorts quarantined due to exposures. This will create significant disruptions and no predictable teaching/learning model. Students and staff perform most effectively with a stable, consistent instructional plan where expectations for engagement and learning are clear and implemented.
- Committing to this approach now allows all district resources and energy to focus on improving our remote model, based upon the successes and lessons learned from our spring experience. Our remote instruction must and will improve.
- Committing to this approach now will help district staff focus on opportunities for specifically identified students with unique needs, such as kindergartners, English language learners, students with special needs, and other students "furthest from educational justice," to have some level of "at-school" or in-person interaction with staff. These will be tightly managed experiences, adhering to all OSPI, Department of Health, and Governor's Office guidance.
- We know that this decision will challenge our community in many ways, including impacts to work schedules and needs for childcare. Making this decision now will provide parents time to develop plans.

The Mount Vernon School Board will hear more about this plan at their next meeting on Wednesday, July 29. Ultimately, every school board in all 295 school districts in Washington State are required to adopt a reopening plan. It is likely our board will hear and consider a recommendation from staff to adopt Mount Vernon's reopening plan at their August 5th meeting.

We live in a richly diverse community and this pandemic has challenged all of us in many ways. We recognize any change to our regular school model creates complications. We make this decision with strong belief that it is the safest option for our community as a whole. We want to express our gratitude and appreciation for your patience and understanding. Now, more than ever is the time to show compassion and grace. Please continue to check our website and social media channels for updates.

Please stay safe, healthy and take care,



Dr. Ismael Vivanco, **Superintendent**



Larry Otos, **Board President**