July 31, 2020

Dear OJR Community,

As you know, school officials across our Commonwealth and the nation are being forced to make incredibly difficult decisions. At Owen J. Roberts, we have worked to make plans that balance children’s educational and emotional needs, family circumstances, and the health and safety of our students, teachers, staff, families and community. Last night, the Board of School Directors reached the decision that Owen J. Roberts schools will reopen in the following manner:

- Grades K-6, in-person with a **Blended Model** with a **Cyber Academy** option
- Grades 7-12, 100% virtual instruction for 2 weeks, then transition to the Blended Model
- First day of school for students moved to September 8, 2020

In summary, with the Blended Model, groups of students would rotate into school for face-to-face learning 2 days-per-week while other students learned remotely, and then switch. There are virtual learning sessions about the blended approach to be held next week. Recorded sessions will also be placed on the District website. Families should contact their child's school directly. The virtual start for our Middle and High School students will focus on mastery of digital tools and virtual instruction, giving students a head start to a rich year of learning. Pushing the first day of school back to September 8 gives us time for additional staff training and professional development so we are prepared to meet the needs of students in every environment. Be assured that the 2020-2021 school year will be very different than the virtual instruction your children may have experienced in the spring. The focus will be on live (synchronous) instruction.

No matter what, in-person learning will not feel like the right choice for some families this fall. **OJR Cyber Academy** will provide flexible learning opportunities to ensure your child’s success. Owen J. Roberts continually ranks among Pennsylvania’s top performing schools and for parents who choose OJR Cyber Academy, students will stay on track with our K-12 proven curriculum which is aligned to PA Core Standards. The OJR Cyber Academy will be taught by Owen J. Roberts’s teachers. Families can expect the needs of their students to be met with supports available. This option offers a lot of flexibility keeping students on track with their peers who have opted for Blended Learning.
The Board of Directors and I would like to thank all who have offered feedback in meetings, through surveys, and via email. We have listened intently to all stakeholders so they might make informed decisions. The Board heard and acknowledged the urgency of the community in regards to getting a plan in place now so that parents, students, and teachers could properly prepare for a successful school year. Like many of you, we were hopeful that we might reopen schools in a traditional 5-day manner, however, current health and safety guidelines do not allow us to do so. Throughout this process, the Board and administration have studied various models being adopted by other schools and utilized expert advice and the most current (and ever-changing) guidelines. The overarching goal in our decision making will continue to be maximizing the health and safety of all involved while continuing our strong tradition of excellence in education.

Conflicting information and many strong emotions surround the decisions about how to reopen schools in the midst of this pandemic. We acknowledge the anxiety and stress that many are feeling and hope that having a solid target for fall will alleviate some of the unrest. We understand that not every family’s needs are met with our planned path forward and we will do what we can to support and connect families with resources. Our plans do offer a great deal of flexibility and allow for easy transitions between learning plans. Students and teachers can be ready in the event that conditions in the future either prohibit in-person instruction or allow for more of it. In these uncertain times, what you can count on, is our commitment to making this school year work so that every student can succeed.

Blended Learning and Cyber Academy programs will provide our students with personalized learning through our proven curriculum taught by our own highly-qualified teachers. All OJR learning models will meet individual student needs and supports. Our plans are to offer as many extracurricular activities as guidelines allow. There will be bussing provided with safety at the forefront. The district has invested in technology infrastructure and will offer live tech support and extensive, ongoing training for teachers. At the high school level, students can expect their full roster of classes including all Honors, Advanced Placement, and Dual Enrollment courses.

With all OJR online instruction, our goal will be to replicate in-person learning by providing remote learning strategies that consistently engage students in discussion activities, social/emotional learning, small group intervention and enrichment, and frequent opportunities to collaborate with peers.

I will be following up with additional information regarding the options for students this fall. Continue to check our website as we add FAQ’s, videos, and details. Thank you again for your feedback, your patience and for your support as we move through these challenging times together. We will remain Wildcat Strong.

Sincerely,

Dr. Susan T. Lloyd
Superintendent of Schools