July 31, 2020

Hello Seymour School Community,

We hope that this communication finds you all safe and well. Thank you to all that have volunteered to be a part of the extended reentry team and for those who have or who are sending in questions for our panel discussions next week which will be broadcast to the community. We are looking forward to working together as yet another extended team which includes ten additional teachers and twelve additional parents to move one of our three plans forward to best meet the needs of our students in Seymour.

This week, on Monday, July 27, the Governor and Commissioner Cardona shared at their press conference, for the first time that districts could now open in a Hybrid Model, instead of reopening school buildings at full capacity. Prior to this point all districts were charged with submitting a plan to the Connecticut State Department of Education on July 24, 2020 that outlined three plans: full in-person learning, a hybrid model, and full distance learning, and the direction was for all districts to plan on full in-person learning. This new information supporting a hybrid model will help the extended team to shift focus from how to bring everyone back safely to how to create a hybrid-learning model that is best for our district. While we know that the best learning occurs when all students are in the building, we are relieved to have the state’s support in recognizing that filling our buildings at 100% capacity at this point may not be in everyone’s best interest.

As you can support and appreciate, the fluidity and changing guidance that we continue to receive is frustrating since we would like to have a clear path from the State in terms of how to open so that we can work on the best plan possible for Seymour. Now that we have the hybrid direction from the State, our extended committee will discuss that at length as well as all of the other options within our three plans that were submitted on July 24, 2020. The rationale for looking at all three in detail is because we are unsure how long we will remain in any one Learning Model. Depending on local and regional health metrics in the coming weeks and months, we may be counseled to move to a full building capacity implementation model or, should the health metrics related to new COVID-19 cases start to trend high, we will have to consider returning to a full Distance Learning Model. Please realize that if the extended group were to only recommend the all distance learning model from our plan, we would have to be able to defend this decision at the State. In this defense, we would have to cite health metrics towards our decision, which as of now, our health metrics do not support such a decision.

We are very excited to work with our new extended team to review the three plans in depth and to focus in on the plan that is best for us. After this group meets, we will communicate this plan with the Board of Education and then with the entire community. We recognize that changes are incredibly challenging for staff and families. We thank you in advance for your continued flexibility and understanding that this is a fluid situation that continues to evolve based on health metrics and guidance from the Ct State Department of Education, the Governor, and Naugatuck Valley Health District.

Please make every effort to keep your families safe and healthy.

Sincerely,
Michael Wilson
Superintendent