

Gibraltar School District

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Dear GSD Families,

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We appreciate your patience and your support as we work to initiate the changes needed to educate our children in this unprecedented time. Progress over the last five weeks has been swift, and we continue to be thankful for the work of the Return to School District Task Force Committees. As you know from my previous communications, our process has involved a tremendous amount of review of information and feedback from families and staff.

The focus of our planning has always been on safety and how to mitigate exposure to COVID-19, while still allowing for quality instructional time, connected teaching and learning, and social-emotional well being for students and staff. Additionally, our committees worked to be responsive to our community's desire to return to face-to-face instruction, continue to provide an online option, and support the likelihood of some level of remote learning during the 20-21 school year. We began by considering several different models that would allow for implementation of the guidelines found in Phase 4. There are many considerations found within the Road Map that are not required, but strongly recommended that our committee have worked to implement or develop appropriate substitutions. One of the first recommendations that we looked at is implementing six feet of social distancing in all classrooms. Due to the size and configurations of many of our classrooms in the district, we quickly realized that we would not be able to achieve 6 feet of social distancing. Once we established this, we began to review several different hybrid models that would allow only half of the students in the classrooms at a time. These, too, posed several challenges with the first being that our students who would only be in school twice a week, teachers would be asked to simultaneously teach in person and virtually, and the stability that the school structure provides for students and families would be greatly diminished. We then started to review block schedules and other hybrid options that would allow more face-to-face instructional time for students while also looking at classroom arrangements that would allow for the use of partitions/barriers to distance staff and students. Finally, our committees wanted an opportunity for staff, students, and families to experience remote learning in the event the district needs to pivot from face-to-face learning to full remote learning.

Ultimately, our work led us to two options that best incorporate the needs of our families while building upon key takeaways from our spring experience with remote learning. As I lay out the plan below, I want to reiterate that our work was not about creating or labeling a plan as the perfect plan, only one that provides choices, high quality learning opportunities, and an environment that mitigates exposure to COVID-19 for our students and staff while also allowing for the possibility of a quick transition to remote learning at any time.

Key Components of the GSD Return to School Plan for Phase 4:

**Additional details regarding the GSD Return to School Plan will be provided in the FAQs found [here](#).*

Option 1 - Face to Face Learning with built in Hybrid Remote Learning

1. Schools will operate on a 2-1-2 model which allows for in-person classroom instruction on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Wednesdays would be a remote learning day for all K-12 students. From an instructional standpoint, the 2-1-2 model optimizes face-to-face instruction and allows for a day of deep cleaning in each building. During the Wednesday deep cleaning, the remote learning component is designed to build staff and student online instruction and learning skills. Staff and students will practice synchronous (live) and asynchronous learning strategies to

build a level of comfort and built in time of support. This will be important in the event the State of Michigan transitions back to Phase 1,2,or 3. Additionally, our staff will have opportunities to be engaged in professional learning and collaboration.

2. Students in Y5/K-5 will learn with classroom cohorts for the 2020-2021 school year. A classroom cohort means that the same group of students will remain together over the course of the day. A classroom cohort significantly reduces points of contact and potential for spread of illnesses, including COVID-19, across a building. Specials classes (art, music, physical education, and STEM) will be taught in the cohort classroom, with the exception of physical education, at times, which could occur outside, in the gym, or in the classroom.

3. Carlson High School and Shumate Middle School will implement a reduced-day block schedule. Students will attend half their classes (3 classes) on one day and the other half (3 classes) the next day. The block schedule would significantly reduce the number of transitions between classes which would help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

4. Learning supports for students with IEPs and 504 plans will continue for all students. Our special education department will continue to provide free appropriate public education opportunities for students with disabilities. Special education and Section 504 staff will work collaboratively with students and families to identify programs and services based on individual student needs, both directly and indirectly, in-person or virtually. Instructional delivery will be designed to ensure the least restrictive environment (LRE) as required by the individualized education program (IEP). As a district we will continue to identify, locate, and evaluate students suspected of having a disability and needing special education and related services. Special Education evaluations and Section 504 reviews will be conducted virtually and in-person, when possible, while adhering to public health guidelines for the safety of students and staff.

5. Students will eat lunches in their classroom with their classmates/cohort. Secondary students will use their Chromebook to order lunch during the first instructional block. Lunch aides will deliver lunches on a cart at the beginning of each lunch period. This will allow the cafeterias to be used as a staging area each day. Lunchroom monitors will monitor classrooms. No student microwaves will be made available during lunches. Parent food dropoff and delivery services such as Grub Hub will not be permitted. GSD Food Service will make lunches available for students that forgot their lunch at home.

6. According to the phase 4 MI Safe Start Road Map, district-provided transportation will require several cleaning and PPE protocols (masks for all riding the bus) in order to provide bus service for all students who qualify for transportation. Please read the FAQ to find out more detailed information about what new protocols will be in place for students riding the bus.

Option 2 - GSD Full Time Virtual Option

We are offering a [full time virtual learning option](#) for families within our district. In order to address the multiple reasons for attending a virtual school, there will be two virtual tracks for families to consider for the 2020-2021 school year:

1. Families can choose to enroll their child permanently at LVS. This option would move a child to the LVS track. With this switch, students would follow all LVS guidelines and be taught by LVS-certified staff. If a student is a high school student, this would move them to 18 credits for a graduation requirement and would not allow for participation in extracurricular activities (athletics, band, etc.).
2. Due to COVID, families will have the option to temporarily enroll in LVS and would receive instruction as an LVS student. Although the MiStar enrollment would be in LVS, students in this selection should still consider themselves a student of his/her home school in regard to extra curricular activities and athletics. These families will be able to review their choice at the end of each semester and move their child back to face-to-face instruction if they deem it appropriate. Students of the Class of 2021 in this option would not be moved to LVS in MiStar and would of course receive a CHS high school diploma and graduate from Carlson High School.

More information is found in the [Virtual Learning Option Letter](#), including information on how to enroll for the 2020/21 school year.

Please follow this [link](#) to our first set of FAQ's. Many of the questions you have will be answered in this document. This document will be updated frequently with additional questions and answers. All families will be notified when updates occur. We encourage you to submit additional questions using the following form: [GSD FAQs for Fall 2020 Back to School](#). Your question may be answered in the FAQ document, or may be answered personally by a member of our administration.

In the next few weeks, you will be hearing from your building principals with additional and very detailed information that pertains to your child's school. All building principals and assistant principals have been highly involved with our return to learn taskforce and will be a great resource for answering questions. Please also look for videos that will detail the safety precautions we are taking for our staff and students and what a day in the life of a student at each level will look like.

We recognize that during this pandemic, there is not going to be a one size fits all approach, no easy decisions or answers and many differing beliefs on how school should look. We recognize that what one family may feel comfortable with, another family may not. It is our hope that by offering two options, we are able to provide each family with a choice that fits their family's needs.

Your Partner in Education,

Amy Conway
Superintendent