

# *School District of West Salem*

*Ryan G. Rieber, Superintendent*

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## District Communication Update

JUNE 23, 2020-The West Salem School District is committed to keeping students and staff physically safe as we plan our return to school in the fall. We know that upon return to school, the importance of caring for the social-emotional and mental health needs of our students and staff will be an important first step in order to continue to provide the high quality of education that is expected of us. Yesterday morning, DPI issued Education Forward guidelines for the reopening of schools this fall. We have been working on regional reopening plans for the past month and will continue these complex, lengthy, and essential discussions as we move closer to the fall. There are many scenarios that will be talked about and looked at, but as we have seen over and over again the past few months, this situation will continue to change. We remain committed to building and maintaining an educational system that allows for in-person, virtual, and/or asynchronous instruction to best cover any and all needs as well as provide for family choice as we head into the fall of 2020 and beyond. This communication is to let you know that we are working hard to prepare to return to school in the fall. While COVID-19 has impacted all of us, we are working in partnership with our county health department, along with the school districts of La Crosse, Onalaska, and Holmen to ensure we are prepared for all possible scenarios going forward. We will work to communicate our plans completely and thoroughly as we draw closer to September of 2020. We will communicate much more as the summer moves on and are planning to issue a survey to parents very soon to inquire about their feelings and needs for the fall. This information will be blended into our decision-making process and a formal plan will be released around the 1st of August.

**Coulee Region Virtual Academy** ~ Part of the planning is to continue to look to local, state, and federal health and education officials for guidance. The precise method of how school will be delivered to our students is a constant work in progress. We continue to plan as if there will be in-person next school year with many modifications for the health and safety of our staff and students. We realize, however, that there may be some families who will not be comfortable with in-person schooling for a variety of reasons.

We want to accommodate all of our students during this uncertain time. That's why, in partnership with the school districts of Holmen, La Crosse, and Onalaska we are creating the Coulee Region Virtual Academy for grades K through 12. Taught by highly qualified teachers from La Crosse County districts, students will engage in a rigorous, state of the art curriculum in a distance learning environment. We want this to be the best possible online learning platform and experience for all of our students.

We will be sending out a survey to all of our families in order to gauge interest in a completely virtual offering on July 1st. This survey is not a binding agreement, it is a way for our districts to gauge the interest of families in our county.

Your feedback is very important to us. Our hope is to touch base with every household in our district. If we don't hear back from you, we will follow up with a phone call.

**WSSD Staff** ~ We are going to be needing your help as well. As parameters get approved by our county health department, we will be asking for your help to provide input on how the plan will work within our schools in our district. Each building will have a re-opening committee and

an opportunity to provide input within the structures provided by the county. We are all looking forward to seeing our students in the fall, and we will look forward to doing that keeping the safety of our students and all of you in the forefront of our decision-making process.

**Graduation** ~ There are many questions about what graduation will look like for our seniors and families on July 25th. Mr. Malott is working in conjunction with other high school principals throughout our county on the logistics of graduation. What this will look like will be dependent upon our county health department's compass. Knowing that the compass will either be in Red or Orange, a plan is being worked on for both of these scenarios. As Mr. Malott and other principals finalize the plan this week, the plan will be shared out by the end of the week so our families and graduating seniors can plan accordingly.

**School Facilities (Indoor and Outdoor)** ~ With the change in the county compass, there have been questions as far as what this means for our school facilities, both outdoors and indoors. At our School Board meeting on June 22nd, the Board of Education made a motion and acted that the expectation is to follow the county guidelines according to the compass. We will be putting signage up on our outdoor facilities with the different colors of the compass so anyone using the facilities will be aware of the county guidelines and can plan accordingly.