



MALONE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Jerry Griffin	Cynthia Reyome	Rhonda Poirier	Philip Hans
Superintendent	Business Manager	District Treasurer	Board President

Dear students, parents, staff and community members of Malone CSD,

In March, we made the difficult decision to close schools and move to a remote learning model. Soon after we made our decision the Governor closed all schools in NYS. Our teachers, administrators, and support staff did the very best they could to continue delivering high-quality instruction.

This summer we received guidance documents from the NYS Department of Health and the State Education Department in late July. On August 7 the governor announced that schools could reopen using our plans which were submitted to NYS on July 31. However, on that day, and in several comments since, he has stated that parents and teachers have to decide if it's safe to reopen schools. As recently as this past Wednesday he made comments that it was risky and problematic to open schools yet he maintains it is still a district decision.

We have reviewed our plans in light of the governor's expectations in regards to testing and contact tracing. We've done our very best to develop a plan that meets the requirements of the regulations put out by the department of health and also provides a sound education.

We surveyed parents asking if they planned on sending their children back to school or if they would prefer a remote learning setting. This was in response to the governor's comments on giving parents a choice in the manner in which their children receive their education. As of today, just over 30% of parents have opted to receive 100% remote instruction only.

During these last three weeks, we have worked hard to make sure we can adequately provide a hybrid in-person instruction model as well as meet the needs of those students who are learning 100% remotely. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of the guidance documents however I feel, along with several others, that it's in the best interest to continue working on these measures to ensure that we are providing the safest learning environment possible.

I'm watching what is happening in school districts across the country that have already opened as well as the impact this crisis has had on several college campuses. It seems that every day that goes by another school district or college campus is shutting down and moving to remote learning due to COVID-19 spikes. I want to make sure that we are ready to safely welcome our students back into the building and not run into the problems that I'm seeing elsewhere.

While this is not an easy decision to make, our in-person hybrid model will begin on Monday, September 21. All students will begin the school year on September 8 under a remote learning model. We plan on beginning in-person instruction on September 21.

There are several areas that I'll be watching.

- The infection rate in our region - several colleges have students returning to the rooftop region of the north country and I will keep my eye on any spike in the infection rate.

- Labor Day weekend could cause a problem in our region if large crowds of people gather to celebrate.

- We'll be watching what happens in school districts in NYS that do open for in-person on September 8. Was there a spike in infection rates? Did they have to shut down due to quarantine orders or positive tests? What can we learn from other openings across the state?

- The availability of PPE supplies. We should be in good shape now, but I'd like to see even more supplies come in to make sure we're ready for several months.

- The ability we have to effectively manage all these requirements in the reopening guidance put out by DOH and SED, including our protocols for COVID-19 testing referrals and contact tracing.

- This delay falls in line with the start of the fall sports season which was delayed by the NYS Public High School Athletic Association until September 21. Our coaches and athletic director will be in touch with any updates in regards to practice schedules or changes. Governor Cuomo announced today that fall sports can begin on September 21 with certain restrictions that will be posted soon on the NYS DOH site.

I know that being in the classroom is the best way to support the whole child and help our students grow; however, we are listening to the advice of medical experts, and the reality is that there are still concerns about having large numbers of students in small-contained spaces. I have discussed these thoughts with our three school physicians and all three agree that this is the best course of action.

While we understand that remote learning is not easy, we are confident that our teachers, administrators, and support staff will continue to work hard to ensure that your children have the materials and supports necessary to be successful.

We are working on a plan to distribute Chromebooks to all students as well as continue our meal distribution. Those plans will be communicated to you in the next couple of days. We're also working on a plan where we can give each parent and student the opportunity to meet their teachers in a safe manner. Principals will communicate this process with parents in their respective schools.

In terms of our students' actual schedules, all middle and high school students will follow the schedule that will be sent to you by next week. Elementary students will be given instructions on how to access Google Classroom for their teacher by September 4 so parents will be able to see their academic schedule for each day.

There will be some of you who disagree with this decision. I apologize for that. The only thing I can say is that ten years from now we may look back and say that delaying in-person school

and going remote for two weeks was a mistake and unnecessary. If that's the case then I'll own it and we can all regret missing two weeks of in-person instruction. However, I don't want to look back ten years from now with regret that we may have contributed to community spread that could jeopardize the health of so many people. I'm willing to err on the extreme side of caution during this crisis. We'll learn a lot during these next few weeks and hopefully, we can safely return to our planned hybrid model allowing for in-person instruction.

The health and well-being of our students, teachers, staff, and their families is our top priority. Thank you for your support as we deal with this unprecedented situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry Griffin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jerry Griffin
Superintendent of Schools
Malone CSD