

July 29, 2020

Dear Hawthorn Community:

Thank you for your patience and support as we plan for our upcoming school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. In making decisions about what our school year will look like, our priority continues to be the health and safety of students, staff, and our Hawthorn community. We have accessed guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Lake County Health Department, and considered both family and staff input via district surveys.

Understanding that each family situation is different, our goal was to provide two different learning models for families to choose from for the upcoming school year. We presented that recommendation to the Board of Education on Monday, July 20th. In the days that followed, we resurveyed Hawthorn staff and families, communicated with the Lake County Health Department, communicated with neighboring district administrative teams, answered parent/guardian questions regarding our recommended models, continued to plan for the implementation of our recommended models, and re-evaluated all Return to Learning options and models.

In their most recent communication with Lake County Superintendents, the Lake County Health Department shared that contact tracing is becoming a challenge and will likely result in multiple disruptions to on-campus learning. In addition, their updated data illustrates that the positivity rate in Lake County is continuing to increase; the rate jumped from 3.7% on July 15th to 4.7% on July 24th. If there are three consecutive days greater than or equal to an 8% positivity rate (7 day rolling average), additional community mitigation interventions will be needed to control the further spread of COVID-19.

Even with our many health and safety protocols in place, once a student or staff member participating in our on-campus model contracts Coronavirus, significant numbers of students and teachers (those who have been infected, and those who have not) will need to quarantine for up to 14 days. We already know of both students and staff who have been infected with Coronavirus. We also know of Hawthorn families who have lost loved ones to the virus. We believe it's time to put our energy and resources into creating a singular, positive school experience that will better ensure a continuity of learning during the current pandemic.

For these reasons, on Tuesday, July 28th we presented a recommendation to the Board of Education to begin our 2020-2021 school year with remote learning for all students and staff. The recommendation was unanimously approved by the Board of Education that evening. I know this decision comes as difficult news for many families. I also recognize that many of our parents/guardians are essential workers, or have been called back to their workplaces full-time. We are therefore exploring a facilitated remote learning option for children in need of adult supervision during the school day. More information will be provided in the near future.

While I believe the best place for our students is in the classroom, at this time our commitment to the health and safety of our students and staff is especially paramount. We are trying to do what is best for the entire community. We will continue to work with the Lake County Health Department to determine when it is safe to reintroduce on-campus learning options; our goal is to transition students and staff on campus in phases, as soon as it is safe to do so.

Until that time, we are committed to providing the best possible remote learning experience for our students; an experience that will not only engage, support, and inspire each of our students, but also continue Hawthorn's tradition of excellence. Please be sure to access our updated district calendar by clicking [here](#). You may also access it via our website at www.hawthorn73.org.

I have been moved by the way our community has come together during these difficult times. We will continue to prevail, together.

Sincerely,

Pete Hannigan, Ed.D.
Superintendent