

Good afternoon parents, this is Vaughn White, superintendent of Hesperia Community Schools with a brief update.

Parents, last week Governor Whitmer released a 63-page plan called the "Return to School Roadmap". Our Return to School Committee made up of parents, teachers, support staff, and administrators met Wednesday to begin the important task of reviewing the roadmap to create a plan for the safe return to school.

The task for this committee is to create a plan for opening school based specifically on the Phase designation of our Region. We are currently under Phase 4 which will allow us to open school to in-person instruction under specific mandates and recommendations.

An example of a mandate under phase 4 is that all students must wear a facial covering in grades 6-12 throughout the day except for when students are eating. Students in Kindergarten through 5th grade must wear facial covering unless students remain with their classes throughout the day and do not come into contact with students from other classes.

So under this specific mandate, there are questions that need to be answered. For example, what constitutes a facial covering? Is that a mask or will a shield suffice? Are we able to keep our elementary classes in a cohort without mixing with other classes so they don't have to wear a mask in class?

So you can see just from this one example there are many questions and many operational and scheduling items to figure out. Remember this is just a Phase 4 mandate. We have to have plans for Phase 3 and Phase 5 as well.

Phase 3 is the phase where we have to have distance learning taking place at home. Our committee will work to help fortify the plan that we had to put in place in a weeks' notice last spring. There is much work to be completed on this plan as well. If we are fortunate to be elevated to Phase 5, it may look similar to Phase 4 with a lessening of some restrictions.

All of the schools around us and throughout Michigan are embarking on the same task of developing their plans. With this process, we will work to create a safe learning environment for our students and staff. Despite our best plans, we know that some parents may decide to choose an online, virtual learning program this fall. If that is your choice we will have a virtual learning option for your child. Our roadmap committee will be putting this option together in the upcoming weeks so parents will have a better understanding of what it is and how to apply.

We understand how the unknowns of the upcoming school year is frustrating as we are living that reality with you. None of us has ever lived through a pandemic so how we navigate through it is completely new territory. Our overall best option for students is to be at Phase 6 which is post-pandemic. Let's work together to stop the spread of this virus now so we have fewer restrictions in the fall. Thank you and be safe.