

FHPS Video Transcript, Forest Hills Forecast, July 24, 2020

Hello Forest Hills families and staff members. Thanks for tuning into the ninth edition of the Forest Hills Forecast. Today, I'd like to speak with you about greater specifics about Phase 4 of reopening our schools for in-person learning and also greater specifics about what things would look like if you choose to have your child go the route of remote learning to start the school year. I want to provide specifics about both of those options that our families can choose. Also in our candid conversation, I would like to say more about the survey that we sent to you late this week and encourage your participation.

So under Phase 4 of the Michigan Safe Start Plan Return to School Roadmap, we have linked this document for the last couple of Forecasts and it's linked again here, I would encourage you to take a look at this under Phase 4. It has pages...in fact, it starts on page 21 and goes to page 36...so 15 pages of detailed descriptions of what schools are required to do and we will follow all of those requirements. It also has strong recommendations different than requirements. We will follow most of those strong recommendations as well. So it should not be a secret to anyone what school will look like and how it will be different from previous years when we've had face-to-face learning and that's been the norm. Things will look very different and I want to talk about a few of those examples today, but I would encourage you, if you're looking for more detail, look at this. Start on page 21 where it provides that level of detail of all the things schools are required to do in multiple areas. I do not want to read to you 15 pages of requirements in this Forecast.

But a few examples. So many of our students begin their day riding a school bus. When you come to a school bus, you'll have to have a mask before you get on. The first thing when the doors open up, you'll have to use hand sanitizer, that look, right there on the school bus, supplied for our students who ride the bus. You'll get on the bus, leave that mask on, get off the bus, you use hand sanitizer again from the school bus before you go into the school building. Those buses are cleaned in between runs. So that bus is

going to another run, it'll be cleaned and sanitized. And then, students will come into the building again wearing their masks. Everyone needs to have a mask on anytime they're in our school buildings in a hallway or a common space, kindergarten through 12th grade and all adults. Students will come to the classroom, and in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, face coverings are strongly recommended. In all other grades and for all adults, they are required.

We will also have hand-washing breaks throughout the day where students and staff, all grade levels, will take time to actually wash our hands and make sure that everyone is doing that, some important mitigation strategy. And again, the strategy of cohorting that I talked about last week and keeping smaller groups together throughout the day, we'll be doing that as well.

An exciting idea that I think is great news, is we want to encourage all of our students, all of our teachers, to spend more time outdoors. We should be doing this regardless if we're in a pandemic or not. We can spend more time outdoors for instruction. We can spend time outdoors, certainly recess and lunch at all grade levels. And we can also go outdoors to have a mask break. We think masks and face coverings will be much more well tolerated if we take time to go outside and take our masks off when we're socially distant from others, and take a little break at that point in time as well.

I also want to share with you that all staff members and adults will complete a health form—an electronic health form—every day that they report to work before we can go into a school building. In fact, I'm doing this as well. Everyone working throughout the summer right now. You'll see a QR code in the front door of a building or on any of the entrances, scan that code with your phone, and you fill out an electronic health form. This is in partnership with the State of Michigan and the Kent County Health Department. All of our staff and all adults are required to wear face coverings at all times unless they are outside and they're socially distant from someone else at that point in time.

Finally, a frequent question I have asked to me, related to in-person learning is, “What happens if someone tests positive for COVID-19?” We just got updated guidance from our Kent County Health Department late last week on this issue. If someone tests positive—student or staff member—that person is excluded from school, obviously and they have to stay out of school for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms, and they have to be fever free for at least three days without the use of fever-reducing medications. And other symptoms, such as shortness of breath, and respiratory issues have to subside as well before they're allowed to return. Other people that may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive, again whether that's a student or staff member, we as a school district, would inform people where there may have been a close contact possibility with someone who has tested positive. The Kent County Health Department will interview the positive case and perhaps also talk to school officials to find out who may have been those close contacts. They will then follow up with you, that's part of the contact tracing element of their work, and find out if indeed a close contact occurred. Close contact is defined as having interactions with someone that lasts longer than 15 minutes and within six feet of distance. So any interaction that lasts longer than 15 minutes within six feet of distance would be defined as a close contact. If you are deemed to be a close contact to someone who's tested positive, the health department would require that you quarantine at home for 14 calendar days since the onset of symptoms of that person who tested positive. So you can see how quarantines and positive cases can have a disruptive effect on the typical operations of schools. And it's why we need to take all the safety protocols that we're taking and everyone do their best to keep this virus at bay.

I want to provide a few more specifics about remote learning. As we come back to school, for those families who would choose remote learning as an option for your child, rather than face-to-face in person learning, or if our region were to return back at some point in the school year to Phase 3 where we have to go back to remote learning, this would look different than in the spring. It be more robust and more comprehensive. What does that mean? That means that attendance and participation are required. That means we'll cover more content and more instructional time will be provided by our

teachers as we go forward. And in areas where we do this in a in-person learning environment where tests and assessments and grades would be issued, we'll do the same thing with those in the online environment as well.

I'm so grateful for our teachers who have been taking advantage of their own time this summer to research more and have more learning for their own professional growth in this area of online teaching. A huge thank you to all of our teachers in this area.

And that leads me finally to our candid conversation this week. And that's the survey that we recently sent out to all households for returning students to Forest Hills. I know there is this tension between certainty that we all crave and also staying nimble. And I also know that the last time we surveyed all of our families about the start of school, your own feelings may have changed in the recent weeks. That's why we're asking you to complete this updated survey. We need to know those families that are strongly looking at having their children start the school year with an online or remote learning, and our younger grade levels have not always been online, even in some older grade levels or some things that happen that don't always happen exclusively online, but this is learning that happens at home. We need to know if those percentages of students that intend to start the school year that way are at one level, say smaller percentages, we'll staff that a different way. Then let's say there's 20 or 25 percent of the students at a grade level in a building were to choose online learning, we're going to staff that a different way. Our teachers are outstanding, but we don't have an unlimited supply. We need to make sure we are placing our staff members where that need is most. So if you would take the time to read over that survey, take the time to look at the specifics of what face-to-face in person learning looks like under Phase 4 of the roadmap, and also with the information I've provided about how online learning would be more comprehensive and more robust than what we've seen previously, and then fill out that survey and get that back to us. Your answers on that survey are not irrevocable, but what we're going to do is we're going to take that information and then contact you to move forward with that process for moving your child into that remote learning environment as we look at the start of the school year.

Thank you. Thank you for enduring what we're all going through and trying to find the best course of action and looking at an environment that is constantly changing. As I continue to talk to the health department, we see good news in our area as it relates to the health and safety and the prospect of reopening schools. But we respect that every family circumstances are unique and different, and every family needs the freedom to make the decision for their own children of what is going to work best for you as we move forward.

I look forward to seeing you again next week. Until then, stay safe and have a great weekend.