

GOOD EVENING!

- ▶ PLEASE MUTE YOUR MICROPHONES.
- ▶ ENTER QUESTIONS IN THE CHAT FEATURE.
- ▶ THIS EVENT IS LIVE STREAMING AND RECORDING.
- ▶ START TIME: 7:00 P.M.



A Timeline of Pandemic Learning in GMRSD

SUMMER 2020-PRESENT

Purpose

- ▶ To show GMRSD community what has been done, what has been considered, and what has been accomplished...that providing more for our students has been the goal from Day One.
- ▶ To prevent misinformation from causing confusion or frustration
- ▶ To answer the recurring questions that have been on the minds of many in the GMRSD community
- ▶ To help the community better understand our processes, our limitations, and our realities
- ▶ To show that, despite the tremendous hardships faced today, our students will still achieve great things

July-August 2020

- ▶ District Administration forms Reopening Committee – consisting of Admin, teachers, nurses, counselors, BOE members and parents – to plan a safe way to educate our students in person.
- ▶ Community survey is distributed to determine who will stay fully remote and who will send students back to school.
- ▶ Initial survey indicates enough students wish remain remote to allow GM to offer in-person to all who want it.
- ▶ July 22: announcement of a plan of 5 days for all who want in-person. This was a MISTAKE because....
- ▶ July 22-25: Many survey respondents who initially indicate “fully remote” preference change to “in-person,” eliminating the ability to safely distance.
- ▶ July 28: Blue/Green Hybrid with Fully Remote Option is approved by County and “ceremonially” by GM BOE; Friday is designated a virtual day for all.

July-August 2020

- ▶ Research districts with similar demographics (enrollment, classroom size, etc.) to determine if we can expand our initial offering. All offered a hybrid model due to Covid-19 protocols.
- ▶ With the directive of six feet of safe distancing being enforced strictly, classroom capacity is capped at 14 (GMMS) and 12 (Central) in most academic classrooms. Lack of extra staff prevents cohorts from being spread out.
- ▶ Students with IEPs, 504 Plans, and ELL are offered the option to attend school everyday.
- ▶ After reviewing numerous options, Edgenuity is selected as remote learning tool. This would prove to be ineffective for much of K-5.
- ▶ Announcement that the initial Hybrid model would be reviewed after six weeks (Columbus Day).

September-October 2020

- ▶ Successfully open schools. Masks are worn. Numbers are low.
- ▶ Restrictions do not change.
- ▶ Some in community express desire for more in-person learning; issues with Edgenuity become prevalent.
- ▶ District begins fiber optic installation project to allow for live streaming of classes to students at home and full days of school.
- ▶ October 9: District announces decision to extend four-day Hybrid model for additional six weeks (to Thanksgiving); More staff is dedicated to Edgenuity program.
- ▶ October 27 BOE Meeting: Motion made to change virtual Friday to in-person; Motion does not pass. Plans are already in motion to do this but are on hold due to potential for Covid-related move to fully virtual.

November-December 2020

- ▶ GMRSD announces intention to end Edgenuity for Fully Remote cohort in K-5 and have these students attend virtual sessions with Blue/Green cohort students, effective December 3.
- ▶ With Covid-19 cases rising rapidly, districts throughout Warren County and all of NJ plan for a transition to fully virtual instruction.
- ▶ November 19: Northwest Region enters High-Risk category on Covid-19 matrix.
- ▶ GMRSD announces move to fully virtual instruction from Nov. 25-December 11.
- ▶ Mid-December: Fiber optic project completed.
- ▶ Dec. 10: As cases continue to rise, GMRSD announces extension of fully virtual learning through January 18, providing the recommended 14 days after the New Year's holiday for any positive cases to be identified (GM has four known positives reported between January 1-18).
- ▶ Dec. 10: It is also announced that the January 19 return would include an alternating Wednesday (fifth day) for in-person students.

January 2021

- ▶ Jan. 5: At BOE Reorganization meeting, a motion to reopen schools five full days is passed. The motion does not specify five full days of hybrid or five full days without hybrid. It is noted that this motion is a “recommendation” and not to be considered mandatory or policy.
- ▶ Plans to add alternating Wednesday are already in place for January 19 return.
- ▶ School reopens January 19. Some classes begin streaming.
- ▶ Plans begin to extend to full days. Initial goal is Presidents’ Day.
- ▶ Community is again surveyed to determine if enough students would remain remote if we opened in-person instruction to all who wished to return.
- ▶ A follow-up survey was planned to “lock people in” on a decision to stay remote. However, upon closer inspection of the data, no classes would be able to maintain safe distancing unless over 70 students changed from their survey choice of in-person to remote. It was determined that a second survey would not be taken, as it would only cause false hope and/or confusion.

The Present and Future

- ▶ After hearing from community members on the overwhelming nature of frequent schedule changes and in consultation with administration and staff, a decision is made to push a move to full days back.
- ▶ District announces a move to a Full-Day Hybrid schedule, effective March 15.
- ▶ Until or unless the safe distancing protocols are lifted, GMRSD will utilize this schedule for the remainder of the 20-21 school year.

Information from the DOH

- ▶ At the present time, we are not aware of when or if NJDOH will issue another update to their own recommendations. But based on the CDC's Operational Strategy, Warren County and Northwest Region would be considered Red "High Transmission." Both exceed 100 cases per 100,000 persons in the last week. Using last week's Activity Report, Northwest Region averaged 27 cases per day. That would be 189 cases per week on the CDC's Indicators and Thresholds table.
- ▶ CDC would recommend the Schools' status be:
 - ▶ Elementary schools in hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance. Physical distancing of 6 feet or more is required
 - ▶ Middle and high schools in virtual only instruction unless they can strictly implement all mitigation strategies, and have few cases; schools that are already open for in-person instruction can remain open, but only if they strictly implement mitigation strategies and have few cases
 - ▶ Sports and extracurricular activities are virtual only
- ▶ Please note that NJDOH has not yet adopted the CDC's latest guidance. Warren County schools should continue to follow the guidance and recommendations of NJDOH and NJDOE.

So, What's Your Point, Mr. Mai?

- ▶ From before I was officially named the Superintendent of GMRSD to today, our district team has worked nonstop to provide more quality and more quantity for our students under the current guidelines and restrictions.
- ▶ We know this is difficult for many families. It is difficult for our own families.
 - ▶ Childcare schedules and expenses.
 - ▶ Fear that your child will fall behind.
 - ▶ Fear that your child will develop or has developed a lifelong dislike of school.
 - ▶ "Get my kids out of the house!"

So, What's Your Point, Mr. Mai?

- ▶ To those who say, "Reopen Our Schools!" we respond, "Our schools are open. We have been open, and we will remain open as long as it is safe."
- ▶ To those who say, "Teachers should work just like other essential workers," we respond, "Our teachers are not only working, but like essential workers they are working harder now than they ever have in their careers. No one outside of the medical field would benefit from a return to a normal schedule more than our teachers. We salute our teachers, paras, nurses, counselors, custodians, principals, and office workers. Because of them, our students will emerge from this with more than you may expect."
- ▶ Our students are **NOT** behind! Every school community in the county, state, country, and world has been affected in some way. A recent study has even shown that the skills acquired during pandemic learning have helped students take more ownership of their learning paths (Project Tomorrow/Blackboard, 2021).
- ▶ We are working for everyone. We want to work with everyone!
- ▶ We were once all in this together. We need to support one another through this awful time in history!

Now, On To Your Questions....

