



August 20, 2020

Good Afternoon Center Cass Families –

Welcome to the “Smart Start” period of the 2020-2021 school year. The “Smart Start” portion of the calendar was designed to ease students back into a school environment full of new routines and social requirements. It was also designed to allow the Administration time to gauge how successful students and staff are in a socially distant or remote setting. Over the next 5-6 school days, we will assess student/adult acclimation, assess our ability to meet ever changing guidelines from IDPH, and track area statistics related to COVID-19, so we can make the best decision moving forward. On or before Monday August 31st, we will use the data we have gathered to make the decision on whether to move forward with our full day calendar or adjust the existing half day learning model to meet the needs of our students, until we are able to execute a full day model. We will continue to make decisions in the best interests of the whole child.

Although the probability of COVID-19 cases at Center Cass remains low, we are prepared if notified of a positive case. Upon notification, a letter will be sent home to families indicating a positive test occurred in one of our three schools. The letter will reiterate that unless you have received a phone call from the DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) asking you to quarantine or be tested for COVID-19, the incident was isolated and addressed by DCHD.

Tomorrow, we resume our mission of “challenging, inspiring, and empowering” our youth, however, in classrooms which look very different. Regardless of the learning preference you have selected for your child, and regardless of the grade or content area of the teacher delivering instruction, the learning processes will be new for everyone.

Although our primary focus will be equipping students with grade level academic skills, we will also be addressing life skills, such as those key to our mission, vision, values, and goals, such as:

- students will be **challenged** to function in socially distant environments physically at school or a remote environment at home.
- students will be **empowered** to become more independent, self-confident, and problem solve.
- students will be **inspired** to take risks, have a growth mindset, and try new things.
- students will be asked to be empathic, inclusive, and accepting.
- students will be required to think critically, think differently, and communicate in new ways.



Not only does the reality of our world make the skills above necessary for students, but it also makes the same skills necessary for adults, inside and outside the school walls. In order to meet the diverse needs of our community and students, we are attempting to meet the needs of those families who want their child physically inside the classroom, as well as those families who prefer their child be physically inside their home. From the remote survey results last Spring, it was clear families wanted more live instruction from their teacher, therefore; the learning model designed for this school year is to meet parent recommendations and requests.

As a faculty the last two days, we learned, we practiced, and we problem solved using new technology and new teaching techniques. And although we have worked out some kinks, there will always be some to work through. If your student has difficulty getting on remotely tomorrow, contact the office and we will do our best to get them on as soon as possible. The reality of our current environment is that all students learning in a remote environment is not ideal, all students learning in person six feet apart with PPE is not ideal, and although combining the models meets preferences, it is certainly not ideal either. And although classrooms prior to March 2020 may have seemed more normal, some would argue that was not ideal either. Point being, the school year is what we make of it. Maybe in 2020-2021, we celebrate the life skills our kids gain-those same life skills that help them become successful professionals, respected community members, and beloved family members. Maybe all of us gain a deeper level of appreciation, respect, empathy, humility, and perseverance. It is the job of public education to prepare students for college, career, and life, and we will do our best this year to do so from every angle we can.

The vast majority of our disinfectant, sanitation, and PPE supplies have arrived and are deployed to classrooms. We are still waiting on shipments of new student Chromebooks which were due to arrive prior to August 1, 2020. Although we have found some workarounds, we apologize in advance if you have an older Chromebook. Please contact our Technology Director if your child's Chromebook isn't displaying speed or holding a charge. Also, please don't forget to review the Internet Agreement form with your student and sign off electronically tonight.

As your new Superintendent, I thank you for your partnership and trust. I ask for your grace as our teachers and employees, who have supported reopening our schools, try new delivery methods inside new environments. I ask for your understanding when we follow IDPH guidelines and send your son/daughter home with any COVID-19 symptom and ask for a doctor's note to return. I thank you in advance for your patience as we find the learning modality that works best for your child and patience as we move students to their preferred style. Administration will be here for you as we navigate these waters, and our employees will show your child the love and respect they deserve.

Educationally Yours,

Andrew S. Wise, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools