

DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

By Dr. Lane Abrell
Superintendent of Schools
September 2020

Dear District 202 Community,

We have about two weeks of remote learning under our belts and so far, it has gone fairly well, all things considered. Thank you to everyone involved.

Our teachers, support staff, administration, technology team, students and families have done an amazing job. Remote Learning in Fall 2020 is indeed much better than it was last spring.

To be fair, we have heard from parents (and staff) who want to get back to in person learning as soon as possible. Likewise, we have heard from parents (and staff) who want to continue with remote learning for the time being until it is safe to return to school.

Predictably, we find ourselves smack dab in the middle of both propositions.

As we have said from the start, we absolutely want to return to in-person learning. Students should be in school this time of year for all the obvious reasons – academics, social and emotional supports, student activities, fine arts, athletics, etc.

However, as we have also said from the start, we will not bring students and staff back until it is safe to do so.

Many people on both sides of this conversation have asked what data will we use to determine if it is “safe”?

The short answer is, many – and more than maybe some would like.

We will continue to follow our “Return ‘20” plan, take our time and assess the many things that will affect our ability to safely run the fifth largest school district in Illinois.

Per our Return ’20 plan, and in no order of importance, our administrators, the Board and I will continue to watch:

- The Will and Kendall County COVID-19 metrics
- Guidance from local, state, and national health agencies
- The numbers of available teaching and support staff
- The numbers of available substitute teachers
- The availability of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Safety equipment supply chain issues
- Community, staff, and student input

We will continue to consider these issues through the end of September or early October and announce a decision as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, we are working as quickly as we can to bring students back into classrooms, starting with our most at-risk students who need more in-person adult support.

This pandemic is an unbelievable challenge for everyone involved. We know and respect that. Remote learning is not the optimal solution, but it is the best solution available under the circumstances. My head swims and my heart breaks just thinking about how hard this is for so many in our community.

Yet, that is the key point here: while this pandemic affects us individually and our local school district, it is not an individual issue. Nor is it a “school opening” issue. It is a community health issue. We must respond to it as such. That includes strictly adhering to the health guidelines or risk the health of our students and staff.

On behalf of our Board of Education and Administration, I continue to request and thank you for your continued understanding, patience, and support.

Together, we will prepare all our students for the future.

Dr. Lane Abrell
Superintendent of Schools
Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202