



September 2, 2020

Good afternoon,

I'd like to address the concerns that have come up since we announced staffing changes on Friday. First, please understand that any changes are a result of the numbers of students who have opted for remote learning, as well as accommodating staff needs. Next, I want to reassure you that we hear you and are responding. We will continue to make changes as school begins and throughout the year, as circumstances change. We ask for your continued patience and flexibility. The only two things we can be certain of this year is that there will be more change and that we will continue to put the needs of our students first in decision-making.

Learning Model Changes

In order to stabilize enrollment, transportation and staffing, and maintain safety for students, no requests to change your child's learning model will be accepted from 1:00 pm today until Thursday, September 10 at 9:00 am.

Remote Learning Academy Webinars

Tomorrow evening, September 3rd we will also be hosting a [YouTube Live](#) webinar on the BoE-live channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg_yVcOI9ec). The link is also posted on the front page of the district website <https://www.fairfieldschools.org>. To better focus the conversation we will have two sessions:

7:00 pm - 7:45 pm Grades K-8 Remote Learning Academy

7:45 pm - 8:30 pm Grades 9-12 Remote Learning Academy

In advance of the webinar, we are providing the following updates regarding the Remote Learning Academy (RLA):

Eileen Roxbee, Remote Learning Academy Administrator

Eileen has been a vital and compelling presence in our district for 16 years, in a variety of roles that take full advantage of her commitment to students as an educator and administrator. She has graciously agreed to return to oversee the day-to-day remote learning activities of our Remote Learning Academy.

Elementary Remote Learning Academy

Your elementary student's Remote Learning Academy teacher/class will be posted in Infinite Campus later today. Teachers will be reaching out to welcome your child and provide the link to join their Google Classroom tomorrow. To minimize any disruption for our students, these class groupings will stay together with their teacher for the full school year, even if the whole district needs to move to fully remote.

RLA elementary schedules will focus on full day core instruction in Reading, Writing, Math, Social Studies and Science. Parents have asked if their RLA student could join their “home school” Specials, since these are being offered remotely in the Hybrid model. Each of our 11 elementary schools has a unique Specials schedule, based on sharing specialist staff among buildings, none of which work with the RLA academic schedule. However, Specials teachers will now use Google Meet to record their synchronous lessons. **Beginning the week of September 14, RLA students will be able to access a weekly asynchronous lesson (in Google Classroom) from each of their building-based specialists in Art, Music, PE, and World Language (3-5 only).** These lessons will include student engagement/response. Building-based specialists will provide regular feedback to RLA students through Google Classroom. We may also be able to offer synchronous band or string lessons for interested RLA students in grades 4 and 5, and will provide more information, after the school year begins.

Middle School Remote Learning Academy

Remote Learning Academy schedules for grades 6-8 will be posted tomorrow, Thursday, September 3. These schedules will provide core instruction in English/Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and World Languages. Physical education will be provided twice a week and RLA students will take Health during one of the four quarters of the school year. Student schedules will also honor their math course sequence. We are looking at options for scheduling individual/small group music lessons for our Middle School RLA students beginning later in September. At this time, we do not have certified staff available to teach other Unified Arts classes in the Remote Learning Academy. We will continue to review opportunities to incorporate Unified Arts classes as the year progresses.

High School Remote Learning Academy

High school RLA class schedules have already been posted in Infinite Campus. RLA High School students will follow the courses on their provided schedule. **Direct instruction will be provided live through Google Meet within Google Classroom.** RLA students will have the choice of joining the Hybrid lesson on one or both days (Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday). Teachers will post a recording of one weekly Google Meet lessons in Google Classroom for all students to refer back to. RLA students must attend class on Wednesdays, when teachers are able to bring students from both hybrid cohorts together with RLA students.

While this change is a practical response to what we have heard from our school community, we continue to have concerns about both our technical capacity to deliver and the instructional soundness of this model. Our high school students, as our most independent learners, have the best chance of making this succeed and we will be watching this closely and making adjustments as we go. We will continue to provide teachers with professional learning opportunities to support their implementation of blended learning strategies.

Teachers will employ a variety of strategies to provide support for students in hybrid learning on days they are learning remotely, and RLA students, including providing synchronous office hours so students can ask questions and get clarification and synchronous grouping among hybrid cohorts and RLA students

Moving Forward

We are looking forward to welcoming our students back on Tuesday, September 8th. As promised, our initial focus at all grade-level and in all learning models will be on building relationships and the social emotional well-being of the children in our care.

We will continue working every day on improving instruction and looking out for the health and safety of our students and staff. Let's get started.

Take care,

Mike

Mike Cummings
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