WOODLAND PARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Dear Families,

I hope you had a relaxing summer and are ready to begin a new school year. This summer has been spent planning for the reopening of our schools as we never have before. The administrative team has spent countless hours preparing schedules, class lists, resources/materials, professional learning, and most importantly preparing for a safe return for both the students and the staff. The custodial staff has done a tremendous job of cleaning, sanitizing and organizing the buildings in anticipation of an unprecedented reopening of the school buildings. This includes the oversight of construction at CO and BG Schools as well as making sure School 1 is ready to open for our youngest learners. Our office staffs have been compiling packets, materials, memos, etc. Thank you so very much to all of you as we would not have been ready to open without your hard work and dedication. I would also like to thank our WPEA Executive Board for meeting with me on regular basis throughout the summer in order to ensure that our colleagues' needs were met for a successful reopening. I also extend a very special thank you to my colleagues, BOE Members, Mayor Kazmark, Acting Chief Uzzalino and all community members and leaders who volunteered their time to serve on our various subcommittees as required for the development of the reopening plan. These committees were instrumental in putting together a comprehensive plan which focuses on ensuring our students' academic and social/emotional needs are met while at the same time providing a safe and healthy environment for all.

Sept. 1st marks the first day back for all staff with professional learning days on Sept. 2nd & 3rd. Our students return to school both remotely and in-person on Sept. 8th. The 2020-2021 School District Calendar is posted on our school district's webpage. Families will also be receiving specific information regarding student schedules, placement and opening school procedures in upcoming days.

We continue to make great strides in the area of curriculum and program. In the area of ELA, an audit of our resources was completed to ensure our staff has the necessary tools to deliver instruction in a hybrid model. Fundations at home learning packs and Geodes leveled libraries were purchased for foundational reading skills in grades K-3. The most current version of Words Their Way was purchased for grades 4 and 5. This continues to support our work in the NJTSS-ER grant. As we enter our third year of the grant, we have focused on our Tier 2 instructional resources and training for our Basic Skills Instruction (BSI). Orton Gillingham based training was completed, and we secured a digital program called Max Scholar for ESL and BSI. Our training and this digital program will ensure systematic, explicit, and multisensory instruction. iReady ELA was secured for BSI and ESL in grades 6-8. In addition to our grant focus on reading, we have secured Writable and Sadlier Interactive Vocabulary for upper elementary students. Writable is a digital program for grades 3-8 that connects assessment results to daily practice and feedback in classrooms, so teachers can meet every writer where they are. In addition, standards-based report card and rubrics have been created for grade 5 in order to align with the elementary model of grade reporting.

We have been preparing for the implementation of our new math program, i-READY and READY Classroom for grades K-8. Revisions have been made to our Kindergarten and 3-5 mathematics curriculum. We have aligned our standards based report card to reflect the suggested CAR model grouping of math standards. In addition, our first grade students had the opportunity to use IXL over the summer in preparation for use during the upcoming school year. Also, we are very excited to announce our new Financial Literacy cycle course for students in grades 6-8. The curriculum for this course is posted on the website.

In the areas of science and social studies, we have purchased additional resources to support curriculum, such as Generation Science, district wide, Newsela Science and Social Studies, grades 6-8. Based on feedback we received from our colleagues, we purchased and installed technology resources to virtual instruction such as, Screancastify and Kami.

As always, the technology department has been working diligently to prepare all of our technological needs for September. All network switches have been replaced and the entire network has been reconfigured. In addition, the access points throughout the district have been reorganized. In doing so, we have improved the speed of the network. All old and antiquated equipment has been removed and discarded from classrooms and storage areas. We are excited to announce that all of our students in grades PreK-1 have one-to-one computer access. In addition, we have added 400 new Chromebooks in grades 2, 3 and 4 and converted our existing windows machines to Chromebooks for grades K, 1, 6, 7, and 8 in order to streamline student experiences. Thousands of student devices have been reimaged and prepared for distribution. In order to create a districtwide, systematic tracking system, all student devices were added to Realtime and every student has been assigned a device. In addition, reimaging and regular maintenance to the computers in our district has been ongoing and continuous throughout the summer months.
School 1 has been outfitted with new switches, access points, desktops, laptops, printers, phone system, security cameras, intercom, clocks, door card access, and new cabling. Also, a fiber optic line has been run to School 1 in order to connect it back to our existing network.
Beatrice Gilmore has added additional Smartboards to the media center and the new classroom. Card access was added to an additional door as well. New access points, and new cabling has been added in order to improve overall connectivity.
Please join me in thanking our technology team for working on this in order to ensure successful implementation in September.

Our school nurses, CST case managers, guidance counselors and Director of Special Services were instrumental in developing the Health and Wellness plan for our reopening. Videos, lesson plans, and teacher/student resources have been created to address the social emotional learning needs for the first month back to school for both remote and in-person learners. Thank you to all for your hard work!

Mr. Wittig and our custodial team have been working tirelessly this summer in order to get the buildings and grounds ready for the opening of school.

School 1 is ready to open: the entire building has been painted and housed with brand new furniture to welcome our first integrated preschool age children in our school district's history! All of our instructional resources have been received and our teachers have been participating in a book club with our Master Teacher in order to become more familiar with the curricular materials and course of study. The preschool teachers have also participated in required preschool programmatic and assessment trainings that support the program.

Space at BG School has been reconfigured to welcome our fifth grade students and teachers. Two new classrooms have been created as well! We are so happy to have finally accomplished this grade level realignment! Thanks in part to the BGHSA and a grant, BG now has two water bottle filling fountains, one on each floor.

We have completed the second stage of the construction project at CO School with reconstruction of five classrooms and the kitchen area. The newly constructed classrooms were created with collaborative learning spaces in mind which will promote deeper understandings and learning of critical academic and life skills. The new learning spaces will also support a student-centered learning environment which will empower the children to be active participants in the learning process through hands on experiences, critical thinking and problem solving. This includes new Smart Flat Panels TVs for the renovated classrooms. Students will have the opportunity to practice important social skills such as communicating effectively with one another and self-regulation, while learning in an environment that reflects real-life experiences. We are excited to be providing educational experiences in learning spaces that meet the needs of our students in our ever-changing society. The new kitchen area includes cabinets and a larger workspace in order to provide a more efficient way to serve breakfast and lunch to our students.

Memorial School is looking better than ever! All of the classrooms and hallways have been painted to give the building a fresh, new look. The main office was also repainted and redesigned and now provides for a warm, welcoming environment for all who enter. Our CST Offices have been remodeled as well and our guidance office now has a front "waiting room area" for those in need. The transfer of grade 5 to BG School has provided us with the opportunity to gain much needed space at Memorial School. We are excited to announce that we now have space for our ELA and Math Supervisors to be housed in Memorial School, so please reach out and welcome them to their new "home". We also have the opportunity to provide all cycle classes with a classroom. No more traveling for our colleagues. And finally, new motion sensor LED lights have been installed in the gym for electrical cost savings and ease on our aging eyes;)

These are only some of the many things that have been happening here in the schools this summer. As you can see, we have been quite busy! As we begin our seventh year together, I continue to remain energized and enthusiastic about our direction. We are moving our school district forward and it is truly amazing to be a part of the process with each and every one of you. Our school district continues to grow because we remain focused on accomplishing our Mission:

"To promote educational experiences which will prepare our students to develop high levels of academic achievement, engage in a lifelong desire to learn and develop a deep respect for life and its diversity in our global society"

If we truly believe this in our hearts, then we will achieve!
Remember: We are all in this together.

I look forward to "seeing" everyone on September 8th.

Your Partner in Education,

Michele R. Pillari, Ed.D.