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## **Superintendent to Parents: Schools Being Made Safer for Reopening on Tuesday**

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Schools should be ready to welcome students full-time (as previously planned) on Tuesday, Sept. 29, with more spacing created for lunch and other safety measures prepared for them, Superintendent Alan Addley wrote in an email to parents Friday afternoon.

"In preparing for all students to return, schools have increased physical spacing practices for lunch," Addley said.

"While the plans vary for each school, students are distanced further apart and/or alternative mitigating strategies are in place. Principals have shared these details with you along with practices for remote learners and other information related to the full reopening."

School reopening is a tentative situation and it's possible schools can return to full remote, online learning or a hybrid, Addley reminded parents. State and district officials said that the amount of the spread of COVID-19 in a community could result in that change.

This continues to be a fluid situation. Despite our best efforts, it is conceivable circumstances may determine the need for the district to return to hybrid learning or full remote learning.

Addley also reminded parents that students continuing to learn online, a situation some parents have opted to do, should be participating on their own, without parental involvement other than supervision as necessary. One consideration for that district policy is the privacy of other students in any online meeting, he said.

"While prevalence of the virus remains low in Darien, adherence to health and safety protocols in the home and community settings will help keep our schools open and community safe," Addley wrote. "Your vigilance and assistance around these practices is appreciated by all members of the community."

Addley also wrote:

"Moving forward, we will continue to share information about confirmed cases of COVID-19 in order to be transparent and communicative and to protect the health and safety of students and staff."

In the recent case of someone associated with Middlesex Middle School who tested positive for COVID-19, resulting in a total of 11 other people going into quarantine for two weeks, Addley shared information Wednesday in an email to parents and staff at the school.

That information was sent out at the end of the day after the district was told about the situation and not released further to the public. On Thursday it was first reported. Despite previous assurances that Darienite.com would be sent districtwide and schoolwide announcements to parents, that was not done, and Darienite.com published Addley's announcement two days after it went out, and only after a parent sent a copy.

Addley sent Friday's districtwide announcement to Darienite.com when it went out to parents.

*Here's the full text of Addley's letter to parents, sent out at 3:24 p.m.:*

Dear Parents,

Good afternoon. I trust this finds your family in good health. In consultation with local health officials, the district has been making its final preparations to welcome students back for our first full day of in person learning on Tuesday, Sept. 29.

In many ways, it will feel like the first day of school all over again as the majority of the student body returns to school for the first time since March 2020.

Opening schools in an in person model has only been possible through the extraordinary efforts of our administration, teachers, and support staff in making improvements to health and safety practices, classroom practices and other lessons learned from the hybrid model.

In preparing for all students to return, schools have increased physical spacing practices for lunch. While the plans vary for each school, students are distanced further apart and/or alternative mitigating strategies are in place. Principals have shared these details with you along with practices for remote learners and other information related to the full reopening.

This continues to be a fluid situation. Despite our best efforts, it is conceivable circumstances may determine the need for the district to return to hybrid learning or full remote learning.

A reminder for anytime a student participates in any form of remote learning, parents are not permitted to record, copy or distribute remote live lessons. Parents are encouraged to have their child(ren) participate via a location that is quiet and free of distraction.

Other individuals in the home are not permitted to participate in or be visible on the video conference, or otherwise observe the lesson, other than reasonable adult supervision of the student.

All individuals shall comply with relevant policies of the Darien Board of Education, including but not limited to those concerning the confidentiality of student records (Policy 5265) and acceptable use of district computer systems (Policy 5300), which policies can be accessed on the Darien Public Schools' district website under the link "Board of Education."

Student privacy and the confidentiality of student information is of utmost importance. Parents are reminded, however, that the district is not in direct control of individual homes or physical locations of participating students.

Thank you for partnering with your school and classroom teacher in the hybrid model and for your cooperation in adhering to our health and safety protocols. While prevalence of the virus remains low in Darien, adherence to health and safety protocols in the home and community settings will help keep our schools open and community safe. Your vigilance and assistance around these practices is appreciated by all members of the community.

Moving forward, we will continue to share information about confirmed cases of COVID-19 in order to be transparent and communicative and to protect the health and safety of students and staff.

You can access the Exclusion and Contact Tracing procedures and real time Coronavirus information from the COVID-19 Dashboard located on the "Reopening" portal of the district website.

Thank you for your ongoing collaborative efforts in helping to return to in person learning in our schools and to protecting the well-being of our greater community.

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Wishing you a restful weekend and an easy fast for those that observe the holiday.

Sincerely,

Alan Addley, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools