



December 3, 2020

Dear EVW Education Stakeholders,

As COVID-19 infections continue to climb across the state and county, we've witnessed an alarming number of schools shift to a distance learning model of instruction. At EVW, we began the school year with an in-person learning model, then slowly transitioned to hybrid as a result of a limited substitute pool and a sudden wave of COVID exposures impacting our students and staff.

As an educator, administrator, and parent, I share your frustrations with the challenges and uncertainty created by COVID. On behalf of all educators, administrators, and board members, we wholeheartedly believe our children learn best while face-to-face with their EVW teachers. Unfortunately, as more and more students and staff get sidelined and we can no longer efficiently staff our buildings or manage the increasing student absences, either because they test positive, or need to quarantine, we need to transition to a distance learning model beginning Tuesday, December 15.

Please know that our administrative team, staff, and board members agonized over this difficult decision to transition to distance learning. I want to commend our staff, students, and families for following the CDC safety guidelines which in turn has allowed us to stay in school to this point. We have managed hundreds of COVID related absences and illness, and need to consider the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of our staff and students, and the ongoing health risks they encounter on a daily basis. We recognize this change and transition in learning model will create challenges for our students, staff, and families, and this decision may not be popular with some. I assure you, our EVW staff are prepared to provide a quality distance learning experience, and we stand ready to serve.

Additional building level details, schedules, and information on meals, materials, childcare and transportation of special needs students and programs will be coming in future notifications. Following are the initial distance learning transition plans and projected timelines for grades PreK - 12.

- Maintain our current model of Hybrid Learning through Thursday, December 10
- Staff planning, no school for students on Friday, December 11 and Monday, December 14
- Grades PreK - 12 begin Distance Learning on Tuesday, December 15. Instruction and lessons on M-TH with office hours and student contact on Fridays
- Phase 1 transition of special needs students and programs on January 11 (case managers will be making contact with identified families)
- Phase 2 transition back to Hybrid Learning for grades PreK - 6 on January 19 (pending MDE & MDH authorization)
- Phase 3 transition back to Hybrid Learning for grades 7 - 12 on January 25 (pending MDE & MDH authorization)

Keep in mind, the Phase 2 and 3 transitioning dates for identified grade levels is a projection, and requires a successful consultation with MDE and MDH. Additional notification on Phase 2 and 3 transitioning back to Hybrid Learning will be provided in the future.

Based on the Governor's Executive Order 20-94 there is added flexibility to provide programming for students during this distance learning time. This will include child care for families who need it, meals, and special education supports. Please watch for future notifications.

The school board and administration do not take this decision lightly and will work closely with our students, families, and staff to create the best possible transition to distance learning.

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it." - Henry Ford

Sincerely,
Mark Messman
Superintendent
Eden Valley-Watkins School District