Pocahontas County Board of Education

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Terrence C. Beam, Superintendent

To All Pocahontas County Families and Employees,

Over the holidays, Governor Jim Justice announced that all students return to a five-day schedule on January 19, 2021. At the January 13, 2021 West Virginia State Board of Education meeting, school systems were directed to return to school at least two days a week beginning on January 19, 2021 with the goal of moving to a five day model as soon as possible.

On Thursday, January 14, 2021 the Pocahontas County Board of Education (after much discussion) voted to return all PK-8 students to a 4 ½ day scheduled beginning on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. High school students may not attend until a county is no longer RED. We will look at the Saturday DHHR map to determine if high school students would return on the following Monday. We will continue to look at the DHHR map daily and are given the flexibility to bring back high school students the day after the county is no longer in the RED category. Also, all schools will dismiss three hours early on Wednesdays to allow for deep cleaning measures to occur.

It should be noted that if, at any time, the Pocahontas County Health Department determines that an outbreak has occurred and that a particular classroom or school must close…we will do so. We do not have the legal authority to close schools county-wide for remote learning with the possible exception of weather-related situations.

Pocahontas County Schools appreciate the input received from employees, parents, community members, the Pocahontas County Health Department, and board of education members. We recognize that many people are concerned during this difficult time and we understand that.

The board and I just feel that we must get our kids back to school as many days as possible. They have missed so much instruction and so much peer interaction that are difficult to reclaim. Kids are resilient and peer interaction will help our students immediately, but the academic loss they have suffered will take much more time to regain.

Parents still have the option to select homeschool instruction or virtual instruction. The deadline for enrolling in virtual instruction for the second semester is fast approaching. If virtual is something you want to consider, please contact Lynne Bostic at the office and if homeschool is something that interests you, please contact Ron Hall at the central office. It should be noted that the school system has the right to require students to return to face-to-face instruction if they are failing the virtual classes or refusing to participate in those classes. Student Assistance Teams will meet to discuss those individual situations with parents prior to requiring the student’s in-person return to school.

To our dedicated employees, your interaction with and importance to our students (regardless of your job title) cannot be emphasized enough. There is no doubt that each of you play an important part in our students’ lives. Don’t forget that all of you are heroes in this difficult time and in some cases the only bright spot in a child’s day. I believe that this pandemic has helped our parents to learn and appreciate you even more. I know it is not easy and I know some of you are very concerned, but you matter to our kids……just remember that.

These are decisions that are guaranteed to be questioned and criticized, and I applaud the board of education members for their willingness to make tough decisions in these uncertain times as to what is best for our students.

With highest respect,

Terrence C. Beam

Superintendent of Schools

