



# ***EDMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

Empowering all students to succeed in a changing society

September 3, 2020

Dear EPS Families,

I have visited numerous schools since the school year began on August 20, and I am delighted by what I have observed in the classrooms. Students are engaged; active learning is taking place, and both students and staff are settling into routines.

However, a snapshot of the classroom is not the whole picture. I know that for many families, the first two weeks of the 2020-2021 school have been extremely rocky, perhaps the most frustrating ever. I have spoken to many parents who report feeling dismayed with remote learning and the amount of technology they are required to learn to adequately assist their children with assignments. Moreover, I know that some Virtual Edmond parents are feeling similarly. I fully acknowledge that several items relevant to remote and distance learning have not been up to the standard that students, parents and our community expect.

I want you to know that I hear you; school board members hear you, and teachers and administrators hear you. Improvements have begun. I would like to take this opportunity to make you aware of several changes that have been made or will be made shortly:

**Remote Learning Support:** Teachers have done a remarkable job of learning new and innovative ways to teach in this pandemic. Moving forward, they will be receiving more guidance and training from content specialists, teacher leaders, and district technology specialists. Specifically, content specialists will be working with grade levels and departments to help teachers understand the concepts behind instructionally sound remote lessons.

**Virtual Edmond:** The district has redirected staff and brought in additional staff members with expertise in remote learning to support VE and in particular the secondary APEX course delivery through Virtual Edmond. We are also reexamining the software to find efficiencies to help streamline students' workflow.

**Parent Support:** Many school sites will be offering both virtual and in-person training for parents to assist with remote learning. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities. These workshops will offer tips and tricks on navigating technology, reducing stress, and keeping your child engaged. And, while you are helping your child, don't forget to take time to help yourself. On Thursday, Sept. 24 from 6:30 to 8:00, the district is offering a workshop on self-care in a changing world and nurturing healthy parent-child relationships. Our new *Family Matters* series will feature guest speakers from the community, discussing the most pressing issues facing parents today. To register, visit [Family Matters](#).

**Mask Breaks:** Elementary school sites are being asked to make mask breaks a priority. The district is also working to make sure that these breaks are consistent at all grade levels. We realize that mask breaks are much more difficult with secondary schools, but we are encouraging students to step outside between classes when feasible to get that break.

**Meal Waivers:** Due to a federal waiver, the district will be able to offer free meals to all children (18 & under) beginning Wednesday, Sept. 9th. Both in school and drive-thru meals will be free of charge. You may pick up one breakfast and one lunch each day. Second meals and extra items will be charged as usual. The free meal program is dependent on funding, but the USDA anticipates that it will be available through December 2020.

Please remember that the district will be closed on Monday, September 7 in observance of Labor Day and Tuesday, September 8 for teacher collaboration day. While the two-day closure will mean that we do not see A-students again in person until September 14, we believe this time spent at the start of the year working in teams will allow teachers to improve their instruction to advance student learning.

As we pay tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers this Labor Day, I ask you to remember educators. At this time in our nation's history, schools are under tremendous pressure to help keep the fabric of society together. Without your continued support, it would be impossible.

Enjoy your Labor Day, practice safety precautions when visiting friends and family members, and stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Bret Towne

Superintendent

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