August 14, 2020

Dear QACPS Families, Employees, and Community:

Welcome to the 2020-2021 school year! I hope you were able to enjoy time with your family this summer, albeit in different ways than you may have been accustomed to. We have been hard at work planning to engage students in safe and meaningful learning for the upcoming school year. Part of that preparation involves staffing schools and the central office with the best and most highly qualified candidates. This year, we are pleased to welcome 21 new teachers and the following district leaders:

Susan Walbert - Principal, Church Hill Elementary School  
Michele McNeil - Supervisor Early Childhood, Pre-K-2 Reading, Title I, Migrant Program

Normally, my Back-to-School message includes highlights of our academic progress on state assessments. As you know, the State Board of Education waived State assessments for the 2019-20 school year so there is no data to report. With school districts across Maryland beginning the school year virtually, I anticipate that there will be a discussion about whether or not school districts will be required to administer state assessments for the 2020-21 school year within the next few months.

As we begin the school year, we will be focused on providing a high-quality academic program in virtual and face-to-face formats with small groups of students. Recall that we are currently in Stage 2 of Governor Hogan’s Maryland Strong Roadmap to Recovery Plan which means that we may not convene in large groups. The school year will begin per the approved 2020-21 District calendar in a virtual format. Within the first few weeks of school, we will begin to invite students into schools for small-group, face-to-face instruction. Students will be invited to attend small group instruction based on prioritized needs. The following is a sampling of the student groups that will be invited to schools for small group instruction:

- Special education - for services that are not conducive to virtual instruction
- English Learners
- Career Technology Education (CTE) - for courses that require industry certification (automotive, carpentry, cosmetology, masonry, nursing, and welding)
- Fire Academy (certain components will be virtual)
- Students identified by school leaders
Schools will open for students in grades 1-6, 9 (and 5 only at Sudlersville Middle) on **August 31, 2020.** Students in grades 7-8, 10-12 (and 6-8 only at Sudlersville Middle) will return to school on **September 1, 2020.** Pre-K and Kindergarten students start school on September 2, 2020. Please remember to complete all back to school forms and review all communications from your child’s school administrators. Important information such as school schedules, protocols for entering school buildings, and parent training on the new learning management platform, Schoology, will be provided by school principals during the week of August 17, 2020. Information about transportation for students who are invited to come to school for small group instruction will be shared once students have been identified. Eligibility for transportation services has not changed. New Teacher Orientation begins on August 17, 2020, and all teachers return on August 24, 2020. Our first School Board meeting for the school year will be held on September 2, 2020, at 6:00 pm.

The **QACPS Recovery and Reopening Plan** outlines the procedures and protocols for returning to school for the 2020-2021 school year in a logical, consistent, and safe manner. The plan outlines key initiatives that the school system will implement including Schoology, the new learning management system. Schoology is designed to increase our capacity for virtual personalized instruction and will facilitate a smoother transition from fully virtual to face-to-face instruction. Please access the Parent Welcome letter for Schoology here. The District Recovery and Reopening Plan contains a variety of resources, schedules, and timelines that you should know. Please take the time to read the QACPS Recovery and Reopening Plan which is posted on the front page of the QACPS website or you may access it here.

After consulting with the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) and the Maryland Department of Health, QACPS has postponed all varsity and junior varsity sports at the high school level until the second semester. Information about rescheduling athletics during the second semester will be shared as soon as it becomes available.

I approach this school year with anticipation. A new school year promises new opportunities to build relationships and realize dreams. We will continue our efforts to implement equitable practices across the school district, prepare our educators to meet the needs of students, and allow a safe venue for students’ voices to be heard. Over the 2020-21 school year, I will continue to engage with our students, employees, and the community on anti-racist efforts to ensure that every student experiences a sense of belonging in our schools. Again, welcome back to school. I look forward to working with you to make this an exceptional school year!

Sincerely,

Andrea M. Kane, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools