

November 27, 2020

Dear Parents, Friends, Families, and Staff:

We at RCPS wish our school community Happy Thanksgiving! We hope everyone was able to spend time with family in this most unusual of years. Regarding the theme of thanks, we are most thankful to work with and serve our wonderful Rutland community. Serving our students is a professional and personal reward for all of us.

You have heard about the Governor's Executive Order prohibiting multi-family social gatherings this week. On Tuesday evening, the Agency of Education requested that schools screen staff and students next week to see if anyone participated in gatherings as defined by that order. Those who answer affirmatively would be expected to quarantine. As you know, RCPS decided to send an anonymous survey Tuesday in order to assess expected compliance with the Executive Order. We wanted to use that data to plan for a return to school on Monday.

There were challenges to this process. While there is an absolutely valid reason to encourage limited social interactions during this pandemic, we are concerned about being intrusive into the lives of our community members. We are also concerned about the clarity of the guidance and how we would efficiently execute expectations on Monday. Yet there is a very real rationale that our community members practice the recommended guidelines outside of the school setting. Those good practices keep our community safe and our schools operating in-person.

We discussed our response as a district. Today, we decided that the best approach was the safest and most orderly approach. We determined that by moving to remote learning as a district next week, we will accomplish a number of goals: continued learning and progress toward curricular targets; a safe period following the Thanksgiving holiday; elimination of the need to question students in a way that some might consider intrusive; and the avoidance of any confusion next week as families and staff try to understand whether their practices over Thanksgiving require a quarantine away from school. We also wanted to make this decision as soon as possible to allow for families to make plans for childcare.

**Remote learning will take place from November 30 to December 4.** We will assess conditions at the end of next week, either returning to in-person learning on December 7, or extending remote learning further if conditions warrant it. This allows our community an opportunity to see if there is a spike in the virus in our region in the period after the Thanksgiving holiday.

We are absolutely committed to in-person learning. Our success this fall is based on two factors. First, the planning that school personnel put in place allowed our students and staff to operate effectively while avoiding any spread of illness while in school. Second, the way our community and families have responded to health guidance has made our county one of the safest in the nation. Our schools stay open because of thoughtful planning and collaboration on common goals.

We apologize for the relatively late notice of this change. The conditions listed above precipitated this decision. We hope all understand that our greatest goal is the safety of our students and staff, followed by an enriching learning experience. Thank for you continued support and your flexibility as we move closer to the end of this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Olsen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and "O".

Bill Olsen, Superintendent