



RYE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

February 22, 2021

Dear Rye Community,

The Rye Teachers Association is excited to welcome back our students! We recognize it is imperative to fully reopen our schools. While COVID-19 is a challenge we will be living with for a long time, many of our learners have struggled with remote learning, and childcare has remained a challenge for many families (including our own teachers). Rye teachers always want what is best for the children and their learning, and the RTA recognizes that in-school learning is best.

To understand why the reopening schedule is slightly pushed back, it is important to understand why Rye teachers were not in favor of Dr. Byrne's initial announcement (on January 29) of a plan to reopen all Rye City Schools starting March 1. RTA representatives spoke with Dr. Byrne just hours before the announcement and expressed why this would be challenging for students and faculty. Bringing all students back full time so quickly would challenge a successful system in unforeseen ways, and the hybrid model, while not ideal, has been working to keep everyone safe, close instructional gaps, and increase student interaction in an ever-changing high-risk environment.

Under the initial proposal, Rye teachers (along with educational professionals statewide) were again being asked to "build the plane while flying it," and decisions were being made without our input or frontline perspective. We believe all voices should be part of the conversation, and there are many important and logistical needs to consider.

We need to have solid student-return numbers to effectively adjust schedules, staffing, and learning spaces. There needs to be time to plan for instructional shifts and consideration of best practices for keeping students engaged in what will be a more restrictive environment. There will still be fewer than 50 percent of faculty fully inoculated against the virus. Vacation travel in the community continues to have a significant impact on the delivery of quality instruction due to unpredictable student quarantines. Lastly, inclement weather gives little access to outdoor spaces reducing opportunities to social distance during meals and snacks.

With this in mind, and after meeting with Dr. Bryne and discussing his plan to reopen schools, we all realized the March 1 date was not enough time for school staff, teachers, and administration to fully prepare for a successful transition and safe return. We believe this new plan better addresses the needs of the community and students while providing opportunities for a more thoughtful, careful, and collaborative rollout -- one that prioritizes safety and instructional integrity.

We appreciate the support of our administrators and the families of our students. As always, the RTA is happy to work collaboratively with the district to ensure the best interests of students is our number one priority. Looking forward to a strong finish to the 2020-2021 school year!

Respectfully,

Michelle Ring, RTA Chief Negotiator
& members of the RTA Negotiating Team