**Reopening Schools Discussion**

As many of you are aware, schools throughout Georgia are tentatively planning what the opening of schools could potentially resemble. This is a difficult task considering the information given today is subject to change tomorrow based on spreadability numbers of COVID 19. Superintendent Dr. Scarlett Miles Copeland reports she appreciates the hard work of the school system and administrators as we attempt to plan the opening of school. The school system and Board of Education also appreciate our students, parents, and communities patience and prayers as we navigate these uncharted waters. We will work through these issues together and make the best of them.

**What we do know:**

The only thing that is constant at this point is “Change.” We will have to be ready to “Change” as the guidance from the State changes.

Currently we are awaiting a Color Coded Map that will be presented from the State DOE in connection with the State Department of Health and the CDC. The Color Coded Map will consist of 3 areas in which each county can be categorized based on spread of COVID: Substantial Spread, Minimal/Moderate Spread, or Low/No Spread. The State has indicated this map will be sent out each week until school begins due to variables changing as we approach the beginning of school. As you can see, all school systems will be evaluating this information each week to make further decisions as to how the beginning of school will occur. All school systems are being advised at this point to potentially plan on all 3 categories because we simply do not know how the Color Coded Map will appear immediately before school begins. This in turn means our families will have to also consider all 3 options as we approach school. We realize this will not be easy, but we definitely appreciate your prayers and patience as we move through these times in preparation for school beginning. This has not been an easy task for Administration in Appling County School System, but we want to assure you all we will do the best we can in this situation that contains many variables. Please continue to remember the guidance the State provides for us today is subject to change tomorrow.

**What we do Not know:**

At this point, we do not know what the Color Coded Map from the State will look like when it is time to begin school.

**What we are doing:**

We are planning in all categories listed below in order to be prepared to start school. These categories include:

Returning Face to Face with Students and Staff

Returning with Online/Digital Beginning

Returning with a Blended Model of Both

We hope to begin school on time (regardless of the method for return) which has been set by the Board of Education and Superintendent prior to COVID 19, Monday, August 3, 2020.

Internet Connectivity Plans

Dr. Copeland reported connectivity for our rural areas has definitely been an issue. The State is telling us they are aware this is the case and are attempting to provide some assistance. In the meantime, Appling County School System has be working extremely hard with the Technology Department to increase connectivity for online/digital learning. We will be adding WiFi outside of each of our 6 schools in which students can access online and digital learning from the Parking Lot of each school.

Dr. Copeland also indicated the school system is working with our City and County Officials on connectivity as well. We are expecting to run a test demonstration model in some areas where connectivity service is limited. If this test is successful, the school system and county is reviewing possible WiFi on Buses in these areas to increase connectivity for online/digital learning for our students.

Devices

Our school district will be considering the feasibility of loaning devices for students (1 per household) for families who do not currently have a device if we begin school with Online/Digital learning.

Summer Programs through GHSA

Georgia High School Association has allowed our Athletic Programs to conduct summer activities with their guidance and guidance from the DPH and CDC. We began our program under Athletic Director Rick Tomberlin on June 8, 2020. The numbers in groups began with 20, was then increased to 25 in a group, and the latest guidance this past week from GHSA was they could allow 50 students in a group. Head AD Rick Tomberlin has reported to Superintendent Dr. Copeland and the BOE they have commenced with the summer program following the guidelines provided from the State. Also, the program has had great attendance and is going very well. We will continue to see what guidance GHSA sends down to the schools as we run these summer programs.

Overall, we will continue to listen to the guidance that is changing everyday and make the best plan we can as we prepare to open school for our students in Appling County.