



EXCELLENCE
TODAY
FOR TOMORROW

Springton Lake Middle School

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August, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

I hope that this letter finds you well and that you are finding ways to enjoy the summer amid unprecedented times. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the start of the 2020-2021 school year! The last several months have been extremely busy (and challenging) as we developed plans for a safe and productive start to the year for our students. We have learned that flexibility has been a necessary approach to each day and each facet of our plans. In order to best meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students, we know that **flexibility** will continue to be critical for all of us as we adapt and adjust to the conditions presented by the global pandemic. Regardless of the circumstances – or the modality of instruction – we are excited for the new school year and cannot wait to welcome our students back to school!

A typical school year comes with many questions about new procedures, routines, and expectations. All of this is amplified this year given the changes that have been required due to COVID-19. I will do my best to highlight the information that students and parents need to launch the school year. Please understand that some elements are still very fluid. This means that I may not have answers/information yet – or that this information may change. You can expect regular communication from me leading up to the first day of school and throughout the school year. At a minimum, updates will be sent via e-mail on a weekly basis each Friday. Please look for and expect this communication from me. More than ever before, it is critical that you maintain a current and “good” email address in Home Access Center (HAC) so that you do not miss any information. I will also post the weekly update to the school’s website. We are using a new format this year for our weekly updates that we hope will be more user-friendly.

The first day of school for students is Monday, August 31, 2020. As you know, we are planning to start the year in a fully-virtual model with all students learning from home until at least October 2, 2020. While the first day of school was initially planned for 6th grade students only, this is no longer necessary while fully-virtual. Therefore, the first day of school is for **all** students. When we are able to begin transitioning students back to in-person instruction, we will plan for an opportunity for 6th grade-only days to support their acclimation to their new school. **Specific directions for what students should do on the first day of school and our plans to “orient” them to the new school year will be provided closer to August 31st.**

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Student schedules and team assignments will be accessible through Home Access Center (HAC) on Monday, August 24, 2020. Information regarding student and parent log-ins to HAC will be included in the summer mailing envelope. New this year, users will be required to create a challenge question to recover their passwords and to access the system. We strongly suggest that you log-in to HAC as soon as possible to complete this process so that you may easily access the system when schedules go live on August 24th. Home Access Center will allow you to monitor information related to attendance, discipline, and grades. While parents will likely find this information helpful, we also urge our students to regularly monitor their own academic progress by visiting HAC. This is one way that students can begin to accept responsibility for their own work and learning – an important milestone and skill for middle school students.

The plan for instruction in both the fully-virtual model as well as the hybrid model is a daily schedule that is largely synchronous. Students will be expected to be present in their first period class beginning at 7:55 AM. Our daily attendance will be taken during this homeroom/first period class. When fully-virtual, all students will “zoom” into the class and be with their teacher for instruction. When we are permitted to move to a hybrid model of instruction, some students (cohort A or cohort B) will be in-person in the classroom, while all other students will attend virtually via Zoom. This virtual group will include those students who have opted for a fully-virtual educational model for the entire first marking period. This type of approach will allow all students to be a part of one classroom community and will provide the most seamless transition should students need to move between models or in the event that a student needs to be absent from in-person instruction for an extended period of time.

The school day in both the fully-virtual and hybrid models will be abbreviated – 7:55 AM to 2:20 PM. There will be an opportunity for office hours and academic workshop from 2:20 PM to 3:00 PM. While students will attend each class for synchronous instruction with their teacher and classmates, we do not anticipate that students will be in a Zoom session with their teachers for the entire block of time. Instead, teachers will plan shorter segments of direct instruction (10-15 minutes) and then “release” students for an opportunity to practice or apply a concept or skill. Teachers will remain available in the class Zoom session for questions and support. We are also planning to have video instruction of that lesson available for students to access in an asynchronous manner, as needed. Students and families will need to understand that our approach to instruction this fall will be very different than the format that was utilized last spring. Being “present” in a Zoom session will be the expectation – just as we expect students to be present in each class period when we are in-person in the school building.

The official, daily attendance will be taken during homeroom/first period from 7:55 AM to 8:00 AM. If a student will be absent from school – even “virtually absent” – we will require parents to follow the normal protocol for absences. Parents are asked to call the student out using the attendance line and also to provide a written note (electronically via the website) within three days of the absence. If students arrive late to school – even “virtually late” – they must first check-in at the virtual main office. A link to the virtual main office will be shared with students in Schoology.

In order for students to have the resources and materials that will be needed to begin the school year, **we are scheduling a time for students to come to school to pick-up items.** Once our teachers return to school the week of August 24th, they will be working to “stage” a pile for each student. The materials that we will provide may vary by course. In some cases, a textbook will be issued. However, for many of our courses, students will be able to access an electronic version of the textbook. Sixth grade students and any students who are new to Springton Lake this year will also be able to pick-up their Chromebook at that time. The pick-up days will be Thursday, August

27th and Friday August 28th. The schedule for these days is indicated below. Students will enter through the cafeteria for a very quick “grab and go”. We plan to assemble the items alphabetically in the cafeteria in order to facilitate this very quick pick-up process.

Thursday, August 27

Last Name A to K: 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Last Name L to Z: 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Make-up A to Z: 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Friday, August 28

Last Name L to Z: 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Last Name A to K: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Students in grades 6 to 12 will again have access to a **Chromebook** laptop for their personal use throughout the school year. Students will be able to use their Chromebooks at school and home. The Chromebook will be a vital part of the teaching and learning process – particularly this school year. Please take some time to review the *Loan Agreement for Chromebooks* that is being provided to all families. Families will be asked to complete an electronic acknowledgement of the loan agreement and the technology responsible use policy. Please complete this as soon as possible, but no later than the first day of school.

We plan to take time at the start of the school year to be sure that students understand the expectations for the care and handling of the Chromebooks. We are fortunate to have this technology available for teaching and learning, and we want to be sure that all devices are maintained in good working condition. We expect students to treat their Chromebooks in an equivalent manner to how they would handle a piece of personal technology such as their cell phones or gaming systems. We strongly encourage some type of case or protection for the device. We have secured a limited supply of a durable and attractive Chromebook case that fits the students’ devices. We will have these available for purchase on the pick-up days. The cost is \$25 (cash or check made payable to Rose Tree Media School District).

In preparation for the eventual return of students to in-person instruction, we have been working to design a number of **strategies and protocols to support social-distancing and to mitigate the risk of virus transmission**. Many of these protocols, including enhanced sanitization routines, will apply districtwide and have been previously communicated from the school district. Here are a few points of information that are specific to Springton Lake Middle School:

- Students will be expected to wear a face covering throughout the day on the bus and in classrooms and hallways. Students will be able to remove their mask while eating lunch. Our teachers will also attempt to incorporate some mask breaks throughout the school day, when possible. We will provide each student with one Springton Lake mask for their use.
- Upon arrival to school in the morning, students will report directly to their first period classes. We will no longer have students gather in a common location prior to 7:50 AM.
- In an effort to decrease congestion at lockers in between classes, students will be permitted to carry/use a regular, full-sized backpack throughout the school day. Students may also find this as a more convenient option to carry their school supplies.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom and common space.
- Use of water fountains will be limited to the bottle-filling mechanism only. Students will not be able to drink directly from the water fountains. Each student will be provided with their

own reusable Springton Lake water bottle that we encourage them to keep in their backpack.

- In addition to the cafeteria, students will eat lunch in several satellite locations throughout the school, including the library and the auxiliary gym. When the weather allows, students will also be permitted to use the outdoor courtyard and tables.
- Locker rooms will not be utilized and students will not be changing for their physical education class. Instead, students will be expected to dress in comfortable clothing/sneakers on assigned physical education days. Activities will be modified and the use of shared equipment minimized. Swimming will be excluded from the program until further notice.
- Music instruction will be modified. Singing and the playing of certain wind instruments will take place at home, outside when possible, and only indoors when significant social distancing (greater than 12 feet) can be achieved.

We typically publish our annual calendar of activities and events at the start of each school year. Given the current situation, some of those events are on-hold for now or may not be scheduled. We will provide ongoing updates on a monthly basis throughout the school year with the hope that we are able to incorporate some of these activities later in the school year. We regret that 6th Grade Transition Camp and our annual Schedule Release Party will not be held this year. Our **Back-to-School Night**, scheduled for Wednesday, September 16th, will be a virtual event. Logistical information to participate will be shared with all families closer to the date.

We recognize that participation in various **activities** is an important part of the middle school experience. We are actively working on a plan for how we can provide these experiences in a virtual environment. Rest assured that this is on our radar and that we will be in touch with more specific information once the school year is underway. In a typical year, many of our clubs and activities do not begin meeting until late September/early October. We hope to maintain a similar schedule for this year.

If your child has not yet completed his/her **summer reading**, please encourage them to do so prior to the start of the school year. Our language arts teachers will use summer reading as an instructional activity at the start of the school year. A link to the summer reading lists can be found on our website.

In closing, please know that the main goal of every staff member of the Springton Lake Middle School is to ensure that each student is provided the opportunity for a positive, productive, and safe school experience. We take great pride in saying, **Every Student. Every Day. No Matter What.** This is our commitment to you and to our students. Regardless of the mode of instruction, we are ready to make this another great year for our school community. We will continue to be flexible with the everchanging conditions of the pandemic and we will continue to communicate with all families on a regular basis. Together, we are **#SpartanStrong**.

Very truly yours,



Robert Salladino, Jr., Ed.D.
Principal

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