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*To inspire each student to  
extraordinary achievement  
every day*

September 4, 2020

To Staff and the Twin Rivers School Community,

The consequences of COVID-19 have been far reaching across both our personal and professional lives. Whether altering how we care for family members and friends or reconfiguring how we work, we have all faced immediate, significant, and rapid changes. This has been a tall order for public schools across our nation.

Consider our own school district: Twin Rivers Unified employs 3,085 people and serves over 12,000 breakfasts and lunches to students daily. On top of that and beginning just a few months ago, our district began to speedily acquire 23,200 laptops, and continues to secure internet access for all households. TR also supports 1,474 teachers to help them shift from tried and trusted in-person teaching to delivering online instruction.

The pace of change required to move teaching and learning online has been head-spinning, but our team did it. We do not boast perfection. We cannot claim that our work is without mistakes or gaps, but we can declare with a calm confidence that our entire team pivoted, and together, we persevered to meet the needs of our students.

Today, while we continue to pay vigilant attention to the immediate needs of our staff and students, we are beginning to consider what tomorrow will bring. Tomorrow is just around the corner.

With the health and safety of staff and students as our primary objective, we are considering how to bring students back to school. Perhaps in small groups or perhaps for instructional and social and emotional support, we cannot be sure precisely how we will phase back to in-person learning, but it will come and we must be ready.

When the time is right, our teachers will enjoy returning to in-person instruction because we know they miss their students – kids are the very reason people pursue a career in education. When the time is right, our students will enjoy returning to school and visiting and socializing with friends.

The day we return to in-person, in-class school may not be soon, but it will come; it is around the corner. I want our school community to know that we are not waiting for a “green light” or for some magic signal. We are beginning our work to return now. Our District leadership team is working with principals and teachers to outline a plan, because by planning ahead, we can set a more reasonable pace for return than COVID-19 handed to us last March.

Fast, furious and frantic, COVID-19 changed our lives in many ways, with no regard for inconvenience and hardship. That is not the way our TR team will welcome staff and students back to in-person learning. Together, we shall create a measured, responsible, and exciting plan to return to the in-person education that we all miss.

## Good News

### **Student Achievement:**

- A priority project for the District—working on requirements and options for small group cohorts to receive in-person instruction, pending agreements with our labor partners. At this time, the focus is on students who may have barriers to engaging during distance learning such as disabilities, language and other challenges.

### **Engagement & Outreach:**

- An ambitious COVID-19 saliva-based voluntary testing program is underway in Twin Rivers Unified. Testing began this week with essential employees who are not displaying symptoms of the coronavirus. With approximately 27,000 Twin Rivers Unified students and staff expected to resume in-person instruction at some point during the 2020-2021 academic year, our top priority is the health and safety of our school community. We will provide the tests at no cost. More information coming on protocols and procedures for taking part in this voluntary testing.
- The District has finalized a contract with Comcast to provide 12 months of free Internet Essentials service to eligible Twin Rivers Unified families until the end of the school year. You'll be getting more information through the Parent Portal on how to apply for free internet in your home.
- Here's the link for both students (13 and older) and staff to create a free account with the New York Times: <https://myaccount.nytimes.com/verification/edupass>. Last week I let you know that four of our high school teacher-librarians secured a \$14,000 scholarship that provides free access to students and staff through the end of the school year. Staff must use their Twin Rivers email address to create an account; students should use their district email account. You can create your own password. All teachers can also register for the NYT in Education site (<https://nytimesineducation.com>), which grants access to lesson planning materials, instructional tools, and ready-made activities for students to use as they hone their 21st century skills. **Additional support, professional development and student tutorials will be provided soon by the high school teacher-librarians.**
- Nutrition Services will now serve free healthy breakfast and lunch to all children and teens, 18 years and younger during this time of distance learning. No paperwork is required! Meal service will continue to be offered as drive-thru, curbside pick-up to help maintain safety and social distancing measures

### **District Operations:**

- We continue to work on our COVID-19 Safety Plan, which encompasses many areas, including contact tracing, PPE, signage and physical distancing. The goal is to have a plan in place that supports continuity of instruction for students and employees when we are able to return to a traditional in-class model of instruction.

It's been quite a busy week, and I want to thank you for all of your great work on behalf of students. I am grateful for your dedication and support as we work together to ensure the most successful outcomes for all students.

We Are TR!



Steve Martinez, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Twin Rivers Unified

***Every Student, Every Day. Leaving No One Behind!***