



Heritage Christian School

"United in One Faith, One Hope, One Heritage"

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August 3, 2020

Dear Parents and Staff of Heritage Christian School,

Summer is passing quickly, and we have now reached the two-thirds point of the Summer break. In this time of great uncertainty, where it seems the only thing constant is change, we give thanks for God's promise that He is the LORD, He changes not, and therefore His people are not consumed (Mal. 3:6). With that assurance, the Board wishes to provide another update regarding the progress we have made towards opening school safely in the Fall.

- **Preparation:** The Board-appointed COVID Committee has been hard at work preparing plans, procedures and recommendations for the Board to consider. The goal of this Committee and its sub-committees has not changed: prepare the building, buses, curriculum, and staff for in-person instruction beginning on August 31. To accommodate this, the Board plans to meet earlier than normal this month, on August 10, to approve the specific plans for HCS to begin school. We intend to distribute our plan on August 12 or 13. Please remember the Board in your prayers as we must make many difficult decisions in the next couple weeks.
- **Guidance:** Our guidance in this preparation is the Return to School Roadmap that was published by the Advisory Council to the Governor. That document can be accessed at https://www.michigan.gov/documents/whitmer/MI_Safe_Schools_Roadmap_FINAL_695392_7.pdf. Our COVID Committee's goal has been to create a *Back to School Plan* specifically for HCS to launch the 2020-2021 school year safely and within the requirements of this document.
- **Phases and Requirements:** In our letter two weeks ago, we mentioned the 6 phases listed in the safe reopening plan. Phases 1-3 require distance learning only, under the premise that the pandemic is considered actively spreading. Phase 4 considers the pandemic as somewhat controlled and allows for in-person school, but with restrictions. Phase 5 is similar to Phase 4 but with far fewer restrictions. Phase 6 is considered post-pandemic, and all required restrictions are removed. It seems unlikely that we will reach Phase 6 until there is a readily available COVID-19 vaccine and effective treatments available everywhere. Heritage and the surrounding geographic area are currently in Phase 4.

The Governor's Roadmap requires that on or before August 17, 2020, each school must publish their *Back to School Plan*. This plan must lay out safety and protocol measures for instruction under each phase. When the HCS *Back to School Plan* is completed and published, the Board will then implement the necessary details, resources, equipment, and training for school to open on August 31, 2020. This will be challenging for the COVID Committee, the Board, and especially the school staff and you, the parents. We covet your prayers.

- **Fever/Temperature-Taking:** Added emphasis must be placed on pre-screening children before they leave for school, as well as putting proper steps in place for students who become sick while at school. HCS will not be taking the temperature of staff or students as they arrive at school. Parents must ensure their children are not sick when they leave for school each day. If your child had a fever, please wait 24 hours after your child is fever-free without medication before sending them to school. Your cooperation is vital in preventing a shutdown at HCS. In love, keep them home an extra day to keep your HCS community safe. The staff is required to abide by the same guidelines. You might purchase a non-contact thermometer to make a speedy and safe exit from home to school every day.

- **Masks:** In Phase 4 and Phase 5, students in grades 5-8 will be required to wear masks/facial coverings throughout the day except when eating and drinking. Students in grades K-4 will not have to wear masks/facial coverings in the classroom, but will be required to wear them in hallways, common areas, in bus transportation, and likely at recess. Please begin preparing your children for this as well as ensuring that they have a comfortable mask. We recommend finding a comfortable cloth mask/facial covering that fits around the neck, can easily be pulled up and down, and does not easily fall off. All masks and facial coverings will be subject to the HCS dress code. Facial coverings that cover the entire head (a full ski mask) are not allowed.
- **Mental Preparation:** The changes we have all experienced since March have been deep and profound, and they continue today as the beginning of school nears. There is wisdom in expecting this change to continue. We expect that we will have school under Phases 3, 4, 5, and Lord willing, Phase 6 this school year. As parents and staff, you should be prepared for this.
- **3 Reminders from Ottawa County Health Department:** 1) Immunizations must be up to date before school can begin; doctors are reporting an abnormally low number of visits and immunizations for the summer months, and they anticipate scheduling difficulties in August. 2) Athletics physicals are not required this year but are still encouraged; if your child does not get a physical, the MHSAA questionnaire (in office) needs to be filled out. 3) Before your child returns to school, please help him/her get in the habit of good hygiene - wash hands often and don't touch face.
- **Commitment:** As noted in the last letter, our continued commitment is to upgrade the remote instruction that happened from March to May. As an organization and as teachers, we have grown from that process, and we pledge that what we learned will bring positive change. If you have a constructive way to improve what was done or not done, please communicate that to the Administration or Board leadership who have signed below.

In closing, we want to assure you that we strive to make every decision for the good of our school and in accordance with God's Word. In this time, we are not afraid, but we place our trust firmly in the Lord, knowing that all things – including sickness and health – come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand (LD 10). For many years, we have had innumerable reasons to be thankful in prosperity. Now in this season of adversity, may we all be patient and respond rightly to these trials. God calls us to two important responsibilities in this regard:

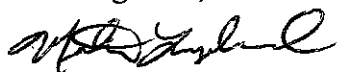
1. **Love for God:** This can and must be demonstrated right now by respect for government and obedience to their rule. They have been placed – by God – in positions of civil leadership over us, for His purpose. While we might not agree with everything the government requires, God commands us in Scripture to obey unless we are being told to do something contrary to His Word. It is our prayer that we encourage each other to grow in this endeavor rather than sowing discontent and resentment.
2. **Love for the neighbor:** We have been given the opportunity to put our love on clear display. Keeping a borderline sick child home for one extra day will show our love for others. Respecting the position of another family because we might not know their specific situation shows humility and understanding. May we, as parents, honor God and love our neighbor especially by teaching our children to obey, to be respectful, to be patient and humble in these trying times.

For the Board of Heritage Christian School,

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