April 15, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing to bring you up to date on our plans for finishing the school year at our three school buildings. I am pleased to report that in our second week of four day, in-person learning, things are going very well. Thanks to our staff, our parents and most of all our students we have had very few COVID related issues.

We took a detailed look at the possibility of adding Wednesday as an in-person day at some of our schools. After a great deal of discussion, we have decided that it is not feasible to do so for the final eight weeks of school. After reviewing several details and weighing the pros and cons, we found that the benefits of having the remote Wednesdays remain. Perhaps most important on the list, our teachers are using Wednesday as very valuable time to reach out to students, both in-person and remote, who are struggling to keep up with the academic work. In addition, we have extensive staff training scheduled for Wednesdays. A significant portion of our elementary staff are in the process of receiving training to improve methods of teaching and remediating reading. By using Wednesdays for this purpose, we can avoid pulling teachers out of classes, using substitutes and the disruption to learning that causes.

The NY State Department of Health has finally issued new guidance for pre-K to grade 12 schools. Our current operating procedures conform to almost all of their recommendations. Implementation of this guidance has been delegated to the local county health departments. We have reviewed our procedures with the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health and have received their endorsement. We continue to operate our schools and programs with the health and safety of the students and staff as our foremost objective.

The spring interscholastic sports season begins next week. I remind parents that varsity, junior varsity and modified (junior high) programs in baseball, softball and track are being offered. In addition, we will join with Rhinebeck Central School District for a boys’ lacrosse team at the junior varsity level. Due to construction at Rhinebeck, lacrosse games/practices will be held here in Pine Plains on our fields. If you have a student who wishes to participate in any of our spring sports and has not already done so, please sign up on Family ID. Please contact the athletic office for assistance if needed.

The Pine Plains Central School District 2020-21 school calendar has four emergency closing days scheduled. We have used three of those days. If there are no further emergency closings, the last day will be “given back” on Friday, June 18th. There will be no instruction or Regents exams on that day. Offices will follow a recess day schedule.

End of year activities and events are being planned at each of our schools. You will hear directly from the school administrators on the details of those events.

In closing, I would like to say what a pleasure it is having almost all of our students back in school.

Be well and stay safe,

Dr. Martin D. Handler
Superintendent