



Mission: Create a culture of deliberate excellence with equity

Vision: Every Graduate will be future ready for personal success, college and career, and the global marketplace

Gobles Public Schools

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Team Gobles

Hope everyone is doing well!

Thank you for being patient with the Gobles Public Schools as we have worked hard since May of 2020 to build a safe and healthy learning environment to return to this Fall of 2020 for both adults and students while balancing the robust mission and vision for learning no matter what Phase of the Return to School Planning that Region 3 of the State of Michigan requires us to be in. To review, the State of Michigan has identified six phases of response to Covid-19 and each region of the State of Michigan can be in a different phase. The Gobles Public Schools belongs in Region 3 of the State of Michigan. Currently, we are in Phase IV. For simplicity, if we are moved to Phases I-III, we will be required to provide Remote Learning. If we remain in Phases IV-VI, we are permitted to provide In Person Learning. Both Remote Learning and In Person Learning have conditions for schools to meet regarding safety, food service, personnel, etc.

Yes, time is of the essence. August 31, 2020 is the first day of school and it will be upon us very soon. There is still much to do by many people before we are ready. Please know that I am aware of the need for expediency. Remember, this is not a normal time. Since March 13, 2020, our circumstances changed and all of us are still working through the chaos as best we can. Unfortunately, the immediate future will be more chaos. Let's work together to help each other make this chaos as much "a structured chaos" as we can.

We are not alone. We do have company. Last Friday, August 7, 2020, I attended a Van Buren County Superintendent Meeting. Here are a list of our county school district counterparts and their 2020 Return to School announcement dates. Bloomingdale-August 7, Covert-August 13, Gobles-August 11, Hartford-August 11, Lawrence-July 30, Lawton-August 11, Mattawan-August 5, Paw Paw-August 11, and South Haven-August 11. I do not have the dates for Bangor or Decatur.

Here is a summary of the process that has informed our 2020 Return to School Preparedness Plan:

*As Superintendent, I identified 24 Gobles Public School District Staff members with expertise in representing 6 particular areas of focus to serve on a Return to School Task Force. (May 19, 2020)

*The Gobles Return to School Task Force consisted of 1 chairperson and 3 members for each of the six areas of focus that included health protocols, teaching and learning, grading and assessment, special education, instructional technology, and transportation. (Local meetings May 26, 2020, June 2, 2020, June 9, 2020, June 16, 2020, and June 23, 2020)

*One of the first acts of the Gobles Return to School Task Force was to develop and implement a Parent Survey and Teacher Survey regarding the Spring 2020 Learning Experience and the Fall 2020 Return to School Learning Experience. Three hundred parents participated and all teaching staff participated in the surveys. The feedback received was understanding of the difficult position that everyone experienced and appreciative of the effort and work to balance basic needs with learning. Additionally, the consensus was that much was learned in the Spring 2020 Learning Experience that can upgrade the Fall 2020 Return to School Learning Experience. (Both surveys were “live” from May 29, 2020 to June 12, 2020)

*The Gobles Return to School Task Force also met with county school district counterparts in ISD Return to School Task Force work. This work has led to some Best Practices and Resources to improve the 2020 Return to School Learning Experience. This initiative included approximately 250 people. (County meetings May 28, 2020, June 4, 2020, June 11, 2020, June 18, 2020, and June 25, 2020)

*As Superintendent, I have met weekly with my county school district counterparts in ISD Superintendent meetings. Attendance and participation at these meetings has allowed me to understand the unique circumstances of each county school district, to hear directly from State of Michigan experts such as the Van Buren/Cass Health Department (3 visits) and Thrun Law Firm (3 visits), to hear/bounce ideas off of my professional colleagues and find common ground when possible on practice, and to gauge the local marketplace. (Superintendent meetings May 29, 2020, June 5, 2020, June 12, 2020, June 19, 2020, June 26, 2020, July 10, 2020, July 17, 2020, July 24, 2020, July 31, 2020, and August 7, 2020)

*The Governor of Michigan issued Executive Order 142 and the Michigan Safe Schools: Return to School Roadmap. The Governor’s Executive Order 142 requires Michigan School Districts to develop a Return to School Preparedness Plan based upon the Michigan Safe Schools: Return to School Roadmap, have it approved by the local Board of Education, and then submit it to the local ISD by August 15, 2020 and to the State of Michigan by August 17, 2020, respectively (June 30, 2020)

*The Gobles Administrative Team consulted each of the District Employee Group’s Leadership on 2020-2021 Return to School Planning. (July 2020 and August 2020)

*The Gobles Administrative Team presented a preliminary 2020 Return to School Preparedness Plan to the Gobles Board of Education asking for feedback and direction. (July 13, 2020)

*The Gobles Administration and GESPA membership conducted a telephone solicitation parent survey on plans for the 2020 Return to School. An 87% parent contact rate was achieved. Three questions were solicited: 1. Will you participate in In Person Learning? 2. Will you participate in the K-12 Gobles Virtual Academy? 3. Will you ride a bus? Of the 87% parent contact rate, 84% of students are planning on returning to In Person Learning while 16% will be participating in the K-12 Gobles Virtual Academy. Also, of the 87% parent contact rate, 31% of students will ride a school bus. (July 18, 2020 to August 4, 2020)

*The Gobles Administrative Team presented a final 2020 Return to School Preparedness Plan to the Gobles Board of Education and received approval. (August 10, 2020)

At the August 7, 2020 ISD Superintendent Meeting, each county school district counterpart shared their 2020 Return to School Preparedness Plan. Every county school district counterpart is offering the Virtual Learning Experience. County School District counterparts that are offering an In Person Learning Experience, full day, five days per week include the Hartford Public Schools, the Lawrence Public Schools, and the Decatur Public Schools. County School District counterparts that are volunteering to switch from Phase IV to Phase III without the Governor's direction and offering a Remote Learning Experience include the Mattawan Public Schools, the South Haven Public Schools, and maybe the Lawton Public Schools and the Bangor Public Schools. County School Districts that are offering a Hybrid Learning Experience (a combination of part In Person Learning and part Remote Learning, some eliminating parts of their programming and shortening their school day) include the Van Buren ISD, the Bloomingdale Public Schools, the Covert Public Schools, and the Paw Paw Public Schools. Of special note, six of the above county school district counterparts have indicated that they would not be able to meet the 6 feet social distancing expectation in their In Person Learning Experiences.

In the current Phase IV, the Gobles Public Schools 2020 Return to School Preparedness Plan is to offer the Gobles K-12 Virtual Academy Learning Experience for those parents/students who do not feel comfortable returning to school as well as the In Person Learning Experience, full day, five days per week. Please see the Gobles Public Schools Return to School Plan and Parent Guidance Document 2020-2021 for an overview and the 2020 Return to School Preparedness Plan for more details.

We look forward to the opportunity to educating your students for this school year. Though we will not be able to conduct business as usual, this not being a normal school year, flexibility is the order of the day. We will continue to make decisions on what is best for students. More information will be forthcoming as we work towards August 31. Please monitor the District Website for further information.

Sincerely,
Jeff Rehlander