

Dear Parents,

As we move into a few more weeks of Remote Learning there are a few things I would like to share with you.

We experienced great success in our first four months of in-person operations but now, as we continue to follow the health department, department of education, and our own district's guidance, the move to remote learning seems to be our best response.

Although Remote Learning is not ideal, we knew this could be a reality going into this year. That is why your teachers and admin staff spent countless hours over the summer preparing. We built a Remote Learning Plan, referenced [here](#). The look to remote learning is much different than last spring. There is greater rigor for students and greater understanding of the technology available to help teachers assist students. Please know even though it is not preferred to be remote, you will see a much different result from this time of learning than last spring.

In terms of the move to remote, the district-wide decision was made due to the following factors: Weld County is currently experiencing high numbers of patients in hospitals and medical facilities, so much so that the system is overwhelmed and quality care for all patients is hindered. Staff members are the most highly affected group at an elementary school. Whether it be a few days for similar symptoms, having to be out for weeks due to possible exposure, or staff members being ill for weeks due to Covid, we would experience staffing issues. Lastly, the guidance from our state is to work hard to decrease close contact of individuals for extended amounts of time.

Many of you have asked, *do we have to follow our district guidelines in this case?* I would love to share some background information with you before we consider such a difficult decision.

Over 20 years ago, Prospect Valley Elementary was closed and in turn, a community fixture and pride of the Valley was left abandoned, taking with it years of students laughter, smiles and learning. Instead of allowing the district to quietly close the school, parents from the area worked together to fight this closure. When it became clear the district would not keep Prospect Elementary open, those same parents utilized a new option in Colorado, opening a charter school. After years of hard work, Cardinal Community Academy was opened in August of 2000. At this point, the relationship between the governing boards of CCA and RE3j was difficult at best.

Over time, your CCA Board of Directors, Principals, and staff have worked hard to build and nurture the positive, collaborative relationship we experience now. This is a very beneficial relationship as CCA has the opportunity to take part in district-wide decisions, access the expertise of the RE3j administrators (for example technology specialists), and utilize the district special education and counseling services. Additionally, the funding from MLO's and Bonds comes from the district as they initiate the ballot questions and distribute the funds.

In the past few days, I also received some requests from parents as to why we did not choose to remain in-person while the district continues remote learning, especially as CCA was not currently experiencing Covid positive cases within our school population.

This is another excellent question. I had considered this and for the following reasons, I chose to continue to follow our district's lead during this pandemic.

As previously stated, our county is running about a 15% positivity rate, data found [here](#). After speaking with state epidemiologists and the state Covid response team, we found that the reason most elementary schools close is that the staff is out due to illness or quarantine. Elementary students are typically found to be asymptomatic but harbor the virus that causes Covid. In turn, they transmit to the adults around them. Our staff has been diligently following the health guidelines and staying home when they are sick, but this has been a challenge as well. Given the rising numbers of positive cases in our area, we can conclude that the occurrences of illness in our building would increase. This would decrease our ability to safely and effectively teach children in-person.

In addition to the health information, I considered that not following our district could have long-lasting effects on our relationship with our district who is our authorizing agent. This healthy relationship between CCA and RE3j allows us the flexibility to choose our own curriculum programming, set a 4-day week, continue to operate our own budget and much more. RE3j trusts us to comply with state and federal school regulations and expect us to follow state guidelines, be it academic or health related. CCA has grown to become an important, respected and vital part of this community. Choosing to not follow the lead of RE3j in this decision to continue remotely during the pandemic, could impair this relationship that all parties have worked so hard to build.

Again, Dr. Rabenhorst reiterated with me that he wants students in-person! But right now, for this short period of time, the benefits of in-person do not outweigh the health risks for students, staff and all of our immediate families.

I apologize for the length of this letter, but hope it gives everyone a greater understanding of how this decision was made. As we move forward, let us continue to ask questions and have open discussions for the greater good of our school community. I will be meeting with Dr. Rabenhorst the week of January 4th. Continue to email me or any CCA Board Member if you have additional questions or comments. I will remain responsive to email over the holidays and will do my best to keep you up to date on our return in January.

Please email your classroom teachers if you have specific questions or needs regarding the remote learning coursework. I hope you have been pleased with the changes implemented. Know your teachers and I appreciate all you are doing to assist at home. We appreciate you! Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Maureen Lockette, Principal.