

Chippewa Valley Schools introduces new virtual academy

Registration deadline is Aug. 6

By: Alex Szwarc | C&G Newspapers | Published July 27, 2020

CLINTON TOWNSHIP/MACOMB TOWNSHIP — Chippewa Valley Schools recently provided updates for what school will look like in the coming academic year.

It is highlighted with the rollout of a new academy — CV Virtual Academy.

On July 21, the district released a return to school update that discusses student learning options for the 2020-2021 school year.

“CVS will offer families different learning options for the upcoming school year,” it states. “Our district operations committee has developed procedures and protocols that will guide our reopening plans for the fall.”

Plans include in-person instruction, a virtual academy, and a hybrid learning model that would contain elements of both.

Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts said much of what the district is doing is based on the state’s return to school roadmap which was released in June.

“We’re also trying to meet the needs of our families,” he said. “Some people will be uncomfortable returning to school, regardless of safeguards we put in place. For that reason, we put together the virtual academy.”

The district says it is reviewing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, guidelines as well as the MI Safe Schools Roadmap.

“Our hope is that we can safely return to in-person instruction as we recognize it is the optimal learning environment for our students,” the message reads. “Nevertheless, we understand that some CVS families may want an online option so we will offer a new virtual academy.”

The new academy provides families with a full-time option for remote learning.

“Students will receive rigorous online instruction, high standards and the same academic excellence that our in-person curriculum provides,” the update states.

Dakota High School Principal Kevin Koskos said the school knows that any learning model brings with it a variety of logistical challenges.

“We continue to look at options on the table,” he said. “We have to wait for families to make their decision as to whether or not they register for the virtual academy.”

The academy is available for students in grades K-12. Families now have the option to enroll in a comprehensive online program.

The deadline to register for the academy is Aug. 6.

In the virtual academy, students will receive traditional grades and be accountable for completion of course work and attendance in the program.

Roberts said the district has to ensure that the virtual curriculum is the same as in-person learning.

“For students enrolled in the CV Virtual Academy, we recommend that students have a parent or at-home coach to monitor progress on assignments,” the update indicates. “Families will receive an email this week with instructions on how to enroll their child in this full-time online learning option.”

Roberts said parents were surveyed earlier this summer, with a majority of parents in favor of a full return to school.

For Chippewa Valley Schools, the start of the school year will depend on Michigan’s phased reopening plan, which currently is in Phase 4.

As explained by the state, Phase 4 allows for in-person instruction with required safety protocols, and hybrid instruction.

From a staff perspective, Roberts said they are waiting to see what direction the pandemic heads in.

“I know that staff has concerns and we’re working hard to ensure that staff can be safe in the classroom,” he said.

Koskos said many people yearn for an option that looks as traditional and familiar as possible, recognizing the fact that safety has to be the top priority.

On June 30, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer released the MI Safe Schools Roadmap.

It directs school districts to develop return to school plans and includes guidance on personal protective equipment, or PPE, hygiene and cleaning protocols, athletics, and more.

“We needed that guidance,” Roberts said. “There are still challenges in that guidance that we’re trying to address.”

The document is intended to aid districts in creating local plans for in-person learning in the fall.

“It’s good to have options laid out and as well-planned as possible,” Koskos said. “If we got through what we did in the spring, we can get through anything.”

The safety protocols detailed in the roadmap includes guidance on PPE use, good hygiene, cleaning/disinfecting, spacing in classrooms, screening for symptoms, athletics, and more.

“Everybody loves summer, which is usually over in a snap, but this summer, you’re so anxious and anticipating the final decisions being made to determine what our fall will look like,” Koskos said. “Each scenario brings with them a unique set of challenges.”

The executive order requires school districts to adopt a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan laying out how it will protect students and educators across the various phases of the Michigan Safe Start Plan.