



Welcome to the 2020-2021 School Year,

My name is Bob Ippel and I am the Executive Director of Rehoboth Christian School. We are so thankful that you will be part of the Rehoboth School family during this unique time in Rehoboth's 118-year history. We are humbled that you would choose Rehoboth during such a time of uncertainty. Probably no other semester has started with such apprehension and concern from parents, students and staff. Probably no other school year has begun with such a great desire to connect with others after months of separation. We want to say, "Welcome!" We think you made a great choice, and we are thrilled to start the school year. A table is being prepared for you!

Months before the pandemic dominated our lives the staff was looking at a theme for the 2020-21 school year. The theme of "Preparing a Table" based on Romans 15:7 was chosen.

*" Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."*

As we have all been accepted by the unconditional love of Jesus Christ, we want to welcome each other to be part of the family where we can celebrate with each other the joys of life and cry with each other when confronted with sorrow. We are committed to each other as staff, students and parents as we do school during this crazy time. Welcome!

In our family, the table has always been an important gathering place. This is where we would all gather for at least one meal a day. We would connect—hearing the happies and crappies of the day. We would laugh a lot and sometimes cry. We would often hear God's Word. Staying connected is such an important part of a healthy family. Each supper, we would experience the nourishment of the food and the fellowship of the family. It is no coincidence that the table plays such an important role in the Bible and that we are reminded that God prepares a table for us. Welcome!

As a family we try to encourage each other and share with each other. I want to thank you so much for the encouragement we have received as we have tried to figure out how to move forward. Everyone understands the challenge that faces the Rehoboth School Board and Administration as decisions are made, and we thank both the staff and the parents for their feedback in terms of how to proceed.

The reality is that we have family members “coming to the table” who have experienced mighty challenges in these months. Some of our staff and families have experienced the illness, sadness, and heart wrenching stories that have come from COVID-19. Some families come with a job loss. We have prayed for many of you these last months. Others have shared about the emotional devastation in their families as students have missed out on a huge part of who they are created to be—social creatures. It is clear that there are a swirl of conflicting emotions within our school community as we enter a new school year. Staff love their calling—the interacting, relationship-building, and mentoring with students. And they also fear for their families and loved ones. Families and students understand the need for human interaction in the educational process, and they too fear for *their* family and loved ones.

How do we prepare the table for a family with such a variety of needs and concerns?

The beauty of Rehoboth Christian School is that we are blessed to be a smaller school with an incredibly dedicated, licensed professional staff and amazing facilities that can allow us to be flexible in how we offer Christian education. It was clear from our most recent survey that 43% of you would like to have your students learn online. 57% of you want to have your children on campus as part of their educational experience. It is clear from our staff survey that some of our staff will not be able to start the year with students because of their health or family situations. Others are ready to be with students in the same room. We believe that our Fall 2020-21 Education Plan will help us in supporting all who are “at the table.” Students will be able to do online or hybrid classes which are designed to keep class sizes small.

### **Here are the key elements of our plan to start the new school year:**

#### **August 4-14: Staff Inservice** (Expanded by 3 days from a normal year)

Every year, we provide staff with training, time to study student academic history, and a chance to become a team. We spend time in prayer for the upcoming school year and explore the theme for the new school year. We welcome new staff. We have decided to expand the number of days, as this year will be like no other. We want all staff to understand the science connected with the virus and the protocols that will be in place for everyone on campus. We want to be sure that the best practices of distance learning and hybrid learning are well understood. We want to give teachers the tools to support our returning students who have experienced loss—whether of a relative, a loved one, or a sense of community. Staff will work together, creating back-to-school experiences for families because we will no longer be able to bring large groups to campus for orientation. Teachers will need to design lessons for the beginning of the school year. Preparing the table will take time—more time this year.

**August 17-21: Staff, Student, and Family Connections** (Expanded from 1 day to 5 days)

Unlike previous years when we were able to have all families on campus together, we are going to use a whole week to orient parents and students for the upcoming school year. We believe it is crucial that there is a personal connection between our staff, parents, and students before there is an online connection. By the end of this week, students and parents will learn how school will happen when they are not on campus—expectations, lessons, materials needed, how teachers will teach, and how students will turn in work. We also hope to design time for small groups of students to be together to get to know each other in a safe, low-risk setting with supervision. This of course will be for parents who choose to have students participate. This week will be unique, but we are hoping it will be informative and fun—preparing us all for whatever comes our way!

**August 24-September 11: Online Instruction for 3 Weeks**

We will begin the school year online. This is something that everyone needs to know how to do, whether they are in the online or hybrid model. Students with unreliable or no internet access will have the option to be transported to school for reliable internet connectivity if their parents wish. Staff will be assigned to supervise and assist these students. Our Title I and Special Education teachers may be asking other students to come in, depending on their learning plans. Having students come in will include an entry protocol which involves taking a student's temperature (at the bus stop or at school if dropped off), answering questions about symptoms, wearing a mask, and washing hands upon arrival at school.

**September 14: Either continue Online or Begin Hybrid Model**

If, and only if, state health directives allow students to return to campus, we will begin with a model of small classes so that we can have education in person safely. Those who prefer the online model would continue as they have been. The remaining hybrid students would be divided into Group A and Group B. Group A would meet on Monday and Tuesday, and Group B would meet on Thursday and Friday. Siblings would be in the same group. Wednesday would be a day of at home learning for ALL students, allowing school buildings to be thoroughly cleaned in between groups. While there is no guarantee that we will not have infection from the virus, we are thankful that we have a campus which has room to spread out. Students do not have to walk in halls. Most rooms have direct access to the outdoors, and there is plenty of room outdoors for classes to meet. This hybrid experience will help staff and students to learn how we can care for each other by wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands and having fun together. Hopefully, this will be a step that will ease the staff and students toward in-person instruction.

**Frequently Asked Questions-** We know that by now, many questions are racing through your mind. We will continue to provide more details in upcoming weeks, but here we will already address some of the questions that we anticipate. Please always feel free to email or call us with questions that need to be addressed immediately.

### **How do I let you know about my choices regarding educational options, transportation, meals, need for a chrome book...?**

We are using your responses that you gave us on the most recent survey. If you have not filled this out, please click [here](#). If you want to change any of your responses, please email me at [bippel@rcsnm.org](mailto:bippel@rcsnm.org).

### **What school supplies do we need?**

Each year we send out Back to School packet. As you can imagine, this packet needed some revision. We will be sending this packet out soon.

### **What about meals?**

Meals will be provided to students at home or on campus if they wish to have them. The cost of the meals is based on whether you are free, reduced or full pay. Students will not be coming to the fellowship hall for lunches. To minimize interaction between groups of students, meals will be served in the classrooms. You will find the meal app

### **What about transportation?**

Bus routes will continue to provide services. There will be changes in the routes from previous years due to fewer riders because of our online learners. We will also use these bus routes to deliver meals. Meal delivery would most likely be once or twice per week. Multiple breakfasts/lunches would be provided at once. Bus stops and routes will be determined once we know the intentions of the various families in terms of need for transportation.

### **What happens if...?**

The good news is that masks, handwashing, and social distancing makes a huge difference! In general, younger people are less vulnerable to the serious effects associated with this virus. Most do not get it or get it with no symptoms. Currently the Navajo Nation and McKinley County have improved in terms of some of the indicators of spread. After talking to many of you, I know we have a school family that generally takes this virus seriously, so I believe we can trust each other to do what is best. I believe our parents will keep their children home if there are symptoms that they see in their child. We all are concerned about young people unknowingly infecting the elderly or vulnerable, and that makes us careful. We are also a people of prayer who believe that God will guide us, no matter the challenges thrown our way. I have heard amazing testimonies of God's faithfulness in your stories of both life and death.

While we do everything we can to keep our staff and students safe, there is a chance that somebody will become positive if we have community spread in our area. So then what? We are family, so we let each other know what is going on.

Whatever protocol we follow will be the most recent recommendation from the CDC and New Mexico Health Department in conjunction with local infectious disease and other medical staff. These recommendations are subject to change.

This is the protocol recently recommended. If a staff person tests positive, all students in contact with the teacher will do only online school for 5 days. If no symptoms develop, they may return to school. The teacher will only return to the classroom if they have self-quarantined for 14 days, show no symptoms, and/or have received a negative test.

If a student tests positive, the teacher and fellow students will stay home and do online instruction for 5 days and return if no symptoms.

### **Will tuition be reduced if I do online learning?**

We are not offering any discount for online learning. Offering online learning is not less work for teachers (or parents!). In fact, many of our staff were exhausted by the end of the fourth quarter last semester because of the work they put into their online classes. To teach creatively and to stay in touch personally with students takes significant time and effort. This year, we add the hybrid option, the purchasing of more Chromebooks, and the hiring of additional staff both for education and for cleaning.

However, like last year, if we are in a position at the end of the year to give families a credit due to where we end up financially, we will do that. You know that the operation of school is funded both by tuition and the donations of people around the country. Both payment of tuition, contributions of donations, and possibly state/federal aid will impact what we can do at the end of the year in terms of offering another tuition credit.

Please know that it is very important that you pay your monthly tuition payments. If there is an obstacle, we ask that you contact us immediately so that we can discuss a plan with you. Communication is key—like any healthy family!

### **WELCOME**

In conclusion, I again want to say, Welcome! Pray for us as we prepare the table of Christian community and education at Rehoboth Christian School. We pray for you as you prepare to join us for the 2020-21 school year. I am thankful to be representing an amazing school board and staff. And I promise that the next letter will be shorter!

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