



August 30, 2021

Dear Families and Staff,

As we embark on the opening of schools for 2021-2022, it is with much sadness that I must inform you of a developing situation related to Staley Elementary School. With the flooding of the building last week, we have come to discover several issues within the physical structure that make the utilization of the building as an instructional facility no longer a wise decision. We have known that there are ongoing concerns related to dampness in the crawl space, however, the recent flooding of the building has required us to bring in various experts to inspect the space as part of the cleaning process. While we feel that we can prepare the building for student use in the next week, what we cannot do is ensure that a repeat of the current situation will not happen again in the future. Knowing what we know at this time, and the amount of time and funding necessary to return the building to a fully functioning school free from health and safety concerns, we, as a leadership team in conjunction with our Board of Education, have made the difficult decision to permanently close the facility.

This means that in short time, the district will redistribute the Staley students and staff into the remaining six elementary schools. Much of this work is underway and families/staff should know by the end of this week where they will learn/work for the 2021-2022 school year. To provide as much time as possible to complete this task, the Rome City School District will be delaying the official start date for all students, preK-12, until **Monday, September 13**. I understand that this will create inconvenience for many members of our community, however, the students, families, and staff of Staley need our support in making this transition work as quickly and efficiently as possible.

With our goal to ensure that ALL students can learn in-person to start the year, delaying the start of the year for students is the best option, amongst many challenging options. In doing this, Tuesday, September 7 and Wednesday, September 8 will be considered emergency closure days and Thursday, September 9 and Friday, September 10 will be Superintendent's Conference Days. Previously scheduled open houses for the elementary schools will be rescheduled for Thursday, September 9. More information, including specifics, related to those events will be forthcoming from the building principals.

Unfortunately, the challenges continue to come as we prepare to begin the new school year. The past year has been a challenge for us all as we have adapted to a new world, and I understand that this news will bring with it a new level of stress and anxiety. With everything going on, I can assure you that we will do everything possible to make this transition as seamlessly as we can. More than ever, our students, families, and staff need all of us to continue working together for the betterment of the whole. As always, thank you for your patience, understanding and flexibility.

Yours in Education,

Peter C. Blake