

Olive Branch Middle School Parents and Guardians,

The release of the DCS Return-To-Learn plan has caused many questions to be raised by parents and students. I wanted to let you know now how this plan will affect OBMS directly, so you can start planning.

Many of the guidelines and suggestions that we are forced to consider before re-opening come from Mississippi Department of Education, MS Dept. of Health, and the CDC.

- These guidelines directly affect many of OBMS “Normal” Policies and Procedures drastically and we have to make things work the best we can while putting changes in place to protect our students’ and teachers’ safety.

All information is subject to change if new guidance is issued by government and/or health officials.

Olive Branch Middle School Return-To-Learn Plan

At Olive Branch Middle, we completely understand that not every parent or student will be in favor of these temporary changes whether it be the safety/medical aspect, academic issues, limited extra-curricular, and/or the limited social contact that students will have.

- Full-time distance learning (VIP) will be an option for students during the 2020-2021 school year. Virtual Instruction Program distance learning will allow students to remain enrolled in DeSoto County Schools while receiving teacher-facilitated online instruction.

Parents can register by completing the distance learning application on the DeSoto County Schools website, <https://www.desotocountyschools.org/distancelearning>, and questions about the application process can be answered by sending an email to distancelearning@dcsms.org

- The application form must be completed by **Wednesday, July 22nd**.
- Extracurricular activities **will not be available** to full-time distance learning (VIP) students.

This is a tough decision and there is no right or wrong answer here. This is a personal decision each parent and student will have to make together.

While OBMS intends to begin the school year with the traditional school model, all parents must be prepared for individual students or groups of students to be sent home for distance learning during the school year. Frequent changes could be made throughout the school year based on the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and community.

Social distancing will be maintained to the greatest extent possible at OBMS. Social distancing recommendations and safest practices will be in place and reminders will be posted throughout the building and students will be reminded of these daily over the intercom. We will post signage throughout the school regarding good hygiene practices, and district guidance regarding staying at home when sick.

OBMS teachers and staff will reinforce procedures regarding daily health questions for students and follow guidelines for students and staff who are experiencing symptoms.

OBMS teachers and staff will follow contact tracing instructions from local and state health agencies. We will isolate and deep clean impacted classrooms and spaces.

Below is information that we hope is temporary, but will be in effect for the 2020-2021 school year unless announced otherwise:

FAQ – Olive Branch Middle School

Arrival

- Our start time has been moved back 10 minutes to 7:20
- Doors will open at 6:55; no student will be allowed to be dropped off any earlier
- Students will report directly to their 1st period teachers' classroom

Dismissal

- Dismissal times will be staggered. Bus riders will be dismissed first and then car riders/walkers.
- Bus rider and car rider pick-up/drop-off locations will be the same as previous years
- Students in the car rider line will be encouraged to wear a mask and to adhere to the social distancing guidelines as much as possible while waiting on their ride. Alternate plans are being considered for the afternoon car rider line to help with social distancing.

Break

- Concessions will be sold by carts and break will be held in the teachers' classrooms

Lunches

- We will have 3 lunches to keep the lunchroom capacity at 50%
- Students will remain 6 feet apart walking to and from the cafeteria
- Students will have assigned seats in the cafeteria that are spaced out skipping seats

Bathroom Usage (Will be limited due to cleaning)

- Students will have scheduled times throughout the day (During their block classes)
- Restrooms will be closed during class changes
- We will limit restroom capacity to three at a time

Class Change

- Class dismissal times will be staggered
- Students will be required to change classes, teachers will not

Student Agendas

- Students will have access and be expected to know all of OBMS rules, policies, and procedures that haven't been affected by COVID and/or have been changed due to COVID
- An updated student handbook will be accessible online at <https://obms.desotocountyschools.org/> by July 31st

Classroom and Instruction

- Seating charts will be used to minimize interactions between students
- Once students are seated, they will stay seated
- Teachers will promote proper social distancing and other health related policies
- Group work will be limited
- Use of shared material will be limited
- Extra classroom furniture will be taken out to provide more space in classrooms

Mask Usage

- Masks are highly recommended for all students and faculty who will be on campus. This is to stop the spread of COVID and to avoid being quarantined if another student around them is diagnosed with COVID.
- Masks must be appropriate for school. Masks cannot be bandanas or have bandana print.

Student Checks

- 1st period teachers will evaluate their students' symptoms of COVID before they begin class and communicate with the school nurse any issues

Water

- Access to water fountains will be limited
- Students will be encouraged to bring their own water bottles each day

Parent Meetings and Conferences

- All meetings and conferences will be held through technology. No in person meetings unless an emergency and/or approved by administration
- All visitors wishing to meet at school will be by appointment only, unless an emergency

Misc.

- No guest speakers
- No visitors will be allowed for lunch with students
- No outside food will be accepted (Fast food, food delivery services, etc.)
- No assemblies or pep rallies
- No field trips
- PE/Band/Choir – Plans are still being discussed for these activities
- Teachers will be contacting their 1st period students to notify them of their class location for the 1st day of school. Students will be issued their schedule on the 1st day of school.
- 6th Grade Virtual Orientation will be sent out to all upcoming 6th Grade parents before the 1st day of returning to school
- We will have a full-time nurse who will be on campus all day
- **If distance learning or a hybrid model must be implemented throughout the school year, students will be held accountable for assignments given during this time. Parents and students MUST understand that students will be held accountable for assignments and will be given grades regardless if they choose the VIP (full-time online) or if they choose to come to school, and we are shut-down in part or whole due to COVID.**

Everyone must be prepared for intermittent closures.

Parents must have plans in place if OBMS closes or if their children are not able to attend school because of a quarantine situation. Parents are urged to be prepared to change plans within 24 hours if needed, and it is critical that parents have updated email addresses and phone numbers on file. If there is a significant COVID-19 spread, OBMS could be moved to a hybrid, or a distance learning schedule for a specified length of time. Any group of students could be moved to temporary distance learning for a period of time. This could apply to individual classes, individual schools, multiple schools, or the entire school district.

I know this is a lot of information, but I hope this helps parents with planning and decision making as we prepare to reopen our school. Please continue to refer to DCS Return-To-Learn plan for additional guidance. Parents and teachers will face many challenges as we figure out the best way to safely educate our children. We are all in this together and we will make the best out of our circumstances!

Adam Sikes – Principal
adam.sikes@dcsms.org