

HMS 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 HMS directly so you can start planning.

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

- These guidelines directly affect many of HMS "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.

Hernando Middle School Return-To-Learn Plan

At HMS, we completely understand that not every parent or student will be in favor of these temporary changes whether it be the safety 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 HMS 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 COVID-19 spread in our schools and community.

Student Safety

Social distancing will be maintained to the greatest extent possible at HMS. 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.

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

HMS 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:

Classrooms and Instruction

- Once students are seated, they will be expected to remain seated unless instructed move
- Wearing of masks will be encouraged
- The use of shared materials in class should be limited.
- Extra classroom furniture should be taken out if possible to accommodate more classroom space.
- Group work will be very limited in order to promote social distancing.
- Students will not be able to leave the room unless there is an emergency

All teachers will be required to have a seating chart assigned for each class.

We will open our doors at 6:45.

- Students who arrive between 6:45-6:55 will go to the gym. They will be spread out to maintain social distancing.
- Students who arrive after 6:55 will go straight to 1st period.
- Class will begin at 7:20
- **Parents will NOT be allowed to drop student off prior to 6:45**

All teachers will have a seating chart for each class.

We will continue to sell break items from room to room

We have added extra lunches to our schedule

- Each teacher will have an assigned lunch time
- Students will social distance to the greatest extent possible to, inside, and from the cafeteria
- Students will have assigned seats to sit in the café that are spaced out skipping seats

Students will receive a printed agenda in a small binder.

- The agenda will have the normal expectations and procedures for HMS.

Lockers will NOT be issued to students

- **Students will be allowed to carry backpacks throughout the day from class to class**
- **Parents are not required to provide hand sanitizer, Kleenex, or wipes that were previously listed on grade level supply lists. We know these are difficult to find. However, we will accept any donations.**
- Teachers will have a place and plan to store backpacks in the classroom

Dismissals to certain periods will be staggered

- Hallways at HMS will be one directional. Students will only be allowed to travel to the right upon exiting their classroom. We will go over this with the students on August 6th.

Afternoon dismissal will be staggered

- Bus riders will be dismissed first, then walkers, then car riders.
- Car riders will report to the back of the gym. Staff will be present to make sure students are watchful and maintaining adequate social distancing.
- Parents, please encourage your child to wear a mask during this time. Also, they need to on-time and looking for their rides.

Restroom access will be limited due to cleaning

Students are encouraged to bring clear water bottles or containers

Parent meetings and conferences will be through technology--No in person meetings unless an emergency and/or approved by admin

Our expectations for behavior in and out of the classroom have NOT changed, but some of our methods for handling discipline issues HAS changed.

- Inappropriate use of electronic devices will be handled as insubordination, but we will not collect student phones
- Mask are highly encouraged. Masks may not cover the whole face and not contain any inappropriate wording or design. Bandanas will NOT be allowed to be worn as mask
- We will expect students to be in dress code

No guest speakers will be scheduled

No visitors are allowed to come have lunch with students

No assemblies... Including class meetings and Informational meetings or presentations such as class rings, etc

No "outside" lunches and/or fast food will be dropped off for students

All visitors wishing to meet at HMS face to face must be by appointment, unless an emergency. Office hours have been set for each administrator:

Dr. Floate (Head Principal): 9:00-10:30

Mr. Smallwood (8th Grade Principal): 12:30-2:00

Mr. Hurst (7th Grade Principal): 7:30-9:00

Mrs. Ratliff (6th Grade Principal): 10:45-12:00

Mrs. Hectorne (Special Services Chair): 8:15-9:15

Parent/Teacher conferences must be set up through Kelly Winn in the main office (429-4154).

We will utilize a curbside services for parents and visitors who have to be on campus for various reasons including checking-out students. They will be directed to call the school once they are on campus and we will ask that parents call

ahead if they are picking up a student. We will have the student ready to go. All the parent will have to do is walk to the front doors and show their ID.

We will have a full-time school nurse who will be on campus all day. Sick students, regardless of illness, will not be sent to the office. Nurse Minor will handle all sick students and medical emergencies. She will be vital in tracking students for quarantine purposes.

We will continue to issue daily medications to our well students in the front office.

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

Other than safety, there are many concerns over Academic Guidelines. Below is our HMS policies guidelines changes/updates taken directly from DCS Return-to-learn plan.

- The absence requirement in the DeSoto County Schools exemption policy has been removed for the 2020-2021 school year. Students are encouraged to stay at home if they are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
- As a proactive measure, the grading scale for the 2020-2021 school year has been adjusted. Instead of a grade of 65 being the minimum passing grade, a grade of 60 will be the minimum passing grade. This adjustment was made to benefit the students in case of closures throughout the school year.
- The Mississippi Department of Education has given school districts the flexibility to adjust the amount of time that students spend in the classroom each day. DeSoto County Schools will reduce the amount of instructional time in order to allow more time for bus arrivals and cleaning, extended class changes if needed, and extended lunch periods to promote social distancing.
- Distance learning opportunities are available for students on a full-time basis.
- If distance learning or a hybrid model must be implemented throughout the school year, students will be held accountable for assignments given during that time.

Parents and students MUST understand that student 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.

Parents may check Parent Portal on August 1st to see their child's schedule. On August 3rd all first period teachers will also call parents and let them know where to report on the first day of school. Students will receive a hard copy of their schedule from their first period teacher.

Parent Reminder:

Everyone must be prepared for intermittent closures.

Parents must have plans in place if HMS 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 with their child's school.

If there is a significant COVID-19 spread, HMS could be moved to a hybrid schedule 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.

PPE Mask are highly recommended for all students 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.

- HMS teachers and staff will be required to practice social distancing around students when feasible. When social distancing is not possible, teachers and staff are asked to wear a mask.

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

We hope with the greatest anticipation that we will return to our normal school policies and procedures as soon as possible, but until then we will make the most of our circumstances.

Sincerely,

Jerry W. Floate, Ed.D.

Principal

Hernando Middle School