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August 3, 2020

Dear HISD Family,

As you know, this school year is shaping up to be different than anything we've seen before; in the past, we've opened school with a basic vision, and as unintended consequences popped up, we've performed tweaks along the way in order to get things running a little more smoothly. This year, however, even the rules by which we can operate have changed quite frequently and at such a rapid rate that the struggle to rethink, redefine, and reorganize has become untenable. With the TEA's change in health protocols from last Tuesday, the delays in acquiring an ongoing supply of adequate personal protective equipment, the lateness of the grant opportunity that allowed us to purchase enough computers to implement an adequate virtual school environment should COVID-related closures demand it, and the forced delay of the provision of a Learning Management System for seamless online/face-to-face instruction that is equitable and compatible, I find it necessary to postpone the start of the school year.

As a result, the start of the school year has been pushed back to September 8th, the day after Labor Day. HISD will still have half days for the first four days, Tuesday, September 8th through Friday the 11th, and the plans for social distancing instruction, mask wearing, and spacing changes during passing periods and closed lunch for the first month (for secondary students) will remain the same. The school year will end on June 11th, 2021 with graduation to be held on June 5th.

The window of opportunity to choose virtual vs. face to face instruction has been extended, from today, August 3rd, through Friday, August 14th. Any selections you make may be changed up to that point; after that, changes in learning modalities (face to face vs. online instruction) may be made no later than the 4th week of the six weeks for the following six weeks grading period.

All UIL sports and band, both practices and games, will go on as scheduled. Our change in start date will not affect those events at all.

I apologize for the lateness of this announcement, but so much of what we rely on to make an informed decision has changed since last spring, when the old calendar was approved. When you factor in COVID-related changes in how school must literally change in order to serve its students, it is evident to me that a postponement is essential in providing HISD teachers and staff the preparation time necessary to do right by our students.

This was a difficult decision to make, but I sincerely believe our students will be better for it. The HISD Team has spent many hours trying to think of how to best serve and protect your children, in ways that range from curriculum to sanitizers to laptops. This school year will be altered in ways that may be hard to accept, but I hope we can resolve to find the opportunities hidden in the challenges, to embrace the endless possibilities, and to model for our students a grace under pressure that will serve as an inspiration to them for the years to come.

Sincerely,

A'Lann Truelock, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools