

Good Evening Teachers,

I know you have been anxious to hear plans in place for OBHS for the 20-21 school year. Assistant principals returned last Thursday and we immediately began planning for safety and distancing while maintaining high academic standards. We plan to face these challenges head on, continue to hold high expectations for our students, and enter the school year with enthusiasm and passion like any other year.

Things related to the school year have been changing daily and I wanted to wait until we had concrete info before sharing anything with you. I didn't want to have to change things. With that said, things are still changing. However, I feel you need the info below and the vast majority of it should not change.

In the middle of spring break, we found out that school we would not return to school. A week later you were asked to develop online lessons and pickup packets by the following week. You had to contact all your students, stay in contact with them, and keep that up for the last term. You succeeded in that difficult endeavor and we concluded the year in very good standing given the circumstances. That was followed by our faculty volunteering to stuff envelopes with report cards, take up textbooks, and hand out items to our students. It was hot, humid, and raining, but you met the challenge. Two weeks later we were challenged with hosting graduation. We started from scratch and put on an absolutely fabulous graduation for our seniors. OBHS met each challenge to conclude the school year.

Once again, we are starting the year in a challenging situation. I have no doubt that the drive and dedication of our staff will meet the challenges ahead. There's no other staff in America I had rather start the school year with. Olive Branch High School, our students and community need us more than ever right now. They need reassurance. They need positive and helpful teachers. They need as much normal as we can provide. Schools are the backbone of strong communities and this is the time we rise up and lead for our students. I look forward to this journey with you. We will struggle, adapt, laugh, learn, help, heal, mentor, mend, feed, teach, grow, question, and do our absolute best for our students. We are OB.

The release of the DCS Return-To-Learn plan has caused many questions to be raised by teachers, parents, and students. I've had a number of teachers reach out to me with question on how to answer or guide parents and students with this new information.

I do NOT want you to try to answer direct questions about the Virtual Instructional Program (VIP) full-time distance learning or COVID issues. Refer parents back to what was sent and the contact info they were given in the parent email concerning VIP full-time distance learning.

What you can do and/or communicate:

We have to stay positive about the situation and point this out every chance we get. I've always asked you to be positive in everything that you do. This situation calls for just that.

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 our "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.

Be understanding... Not every parent or student will agree with these temporary changes whether it be the safety aspect (Not doing enough or doing too much), academic issues, limited extra-curricular, and/or the limited social contact that students will have.

THERE ARE OPTIONS!!!

- As you talk to parents, let them know that you understand that 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.

I am going to send parents our Return-To-Learn plan that is specific to OBHS in the coming days. This will outline every policy and procedure that has been changed due to COVID. I will send it to you as a reference before I send it to parents, but I am going to mention some of the major changes in this email. I would much rather introduce this type of info in person at PD, but you need to have this information now for planning. Some things mentioned may not be detailed, but we will go over the specific plan for each new policy and procedure at professional development.

Please do not get overwhelmed because there are major changes to our day to day operations and our normal teaching routine.

Please keep the information below among OBHS staff until I send out the plan to parents.

Below is info that we hope is temporary but will be in effect for the 20-21 school year unless announced otherwise:

Instruction and Schoology. There will be no pickup packets, Remind 101 assignments or SchoolStatus assignments as we go forward. Every teacher must become fluent in Schoology and be able to flip the switch from online to traditional teaching and back quickly. You will receive extensive training on the new Schoology platform.

Just like I've had to do for the entire building... Every decision, policy, procedure, and plan in your classroom will have to be rethought and evaluated based on best practices for COVID guidelines.

- Once students are seated, they will be expected to remain seated unless you tell them they can move.
- You must have social distancing in place and promote wearing protective masks in your classroom (Masks may be mandatory by the time we return).
- 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 should all face in the same direction

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

You are going to have to rethink your entire approach to teaching and instruction. Every assignment, method, and technique that you use must be in an on-line format (Schoology). We will spend a majority of PD time learning how to put our normal teaching methods and content into an on-line format through Schoology.

OBHS students will be held at the utmost of academic accountability this year. Whether we have state tests that "count" or not, our expectations are not different but may need to be modified considering our circumstances. You will have tough decisions to make as departments as you discuss the depth and breadth of the content that is presented this year in your "on-line classroom."

Every teacher will be trained with Schoology and be expected to use and master the program.

You may have a mix of students on your roll... Some of your students may be VIP-Virtual learning Program (Full-time online) students and you may never physically see them, and some may come to school and physically be in your classroom each day. YOU are responsible for teaching them BOTH.

You may have a student who is physically with you face-to-face the first 9 weeks, but chooses to switch to VIP (Full-time online) during the second 9 weeks. You are responsible for teaching this student.

You may have a student with you face-to-face on a Monday but out for 2 weeks on Tuesday due to a quarantine issue in another class. You are responsible for teaching this student.

Your 3rd Block Class (Including you), may be sent home for 2 weeks with a quarantine or precaution. You are responsible for teaching your 3rd block students AND your other sections.

The entire school is under quarantine and students are sent home for 7 weeks. You are responsible for teaching your students

We could switch to a hybrid schedule and use an A/B schedule with you seeing different kids on your roll every other day

With these possible scenarios, you can see why using online instruction for teachers is NOT an option this year. All teachers must be prepared and able to “flip the switch” with instruction whether it be face-to-face or on-line. This “switch” could be the 2nd day of school or for a long or short period of time and may change quickly and often. This will be harder for some than others and may challenge even our best and most experienced teachers. This will also be a challenge for other subjects and classes that are more hands on. If you teach drivers ed, PE, art, QV, you must start to think about how your classes will be organized online with Schoology.

Our start time has been moved back 10 minutes to 7:45

- The time students may enter the building remains at 7:00.

All teachers must be clocked-in each day by 7:00 and in their rooms by 7:10. We will dismiss students to first block at 7:10. We can no longer allow them to congregate in the commons and cafe in the mornings for an extended period of time.

Buses will release one at a time in the mornings rather than all at once.

Assignments for morning, break, dismissal, and lunch duty are not complete, but all teachers and staff will be assigned various supervision duties throughout the year that may become a daily duty assignment.

Our class schedule times will be different and we will have numerous moving parts for each student, class, and teacher at class change, lunch, break, and arrival and dismissals. Right now we are looking at having a 9th and 10th grade class change followed by 11th and 12th.

Dismissal has been moved to 2:45 and dismissals will be staggered. We are currently looking at bus drivers' classes dismissed first so drivers can get to their buses. C, D, G, and F halls dismissed three minutes later, and everyone else dismissed last. The first dismissal bell will ring around 2:35 so we can get buses off campus by 2:45.

We will have lunches scheduled during the entirety of 3rd block

We will likely have 5 lunches and they will be a mix of classes from each hall so that we stay within a total capacity number. We cannot have an A hall or B hall lunch as in the past due to capacity numbers. It's likely the lunch schedule will be altered the first couple of days so we can stay below a specific number of students in the cafe.

Each class will have assigned tables to sit during lunch and must skip every other seat. Seats will have X's on them so students know which seats are off limits. It will not be free seating as in the past.

For the first couple of days, teachers will walk their classes to lunch and walk them back at dismissal. There will not be a bell that releases all first lunch students to the cafe and another that dismisses them all back. Lunches will be staggered for distancing purposes. I am relying on you to help maintain social distancing (6ft) in the lunch line as we set new norms.

Children of staff will report directly to their parents' room or location as soon as they are dropped at school from the shuttle bus in the afternoon as in the past.

Printed student agendas will not be issued

- Students will have access to an online handbook and be expected to know all of OBHS rules, policies, and procedures that haven't been affected by COVID AND/OR have been changed due to COVID.

Restroom access will remain the same during class changes. Disposable hall passes will be available from each teacher for travel during classes.

We will NOT issue tardies as we did last year at the tardy station. Do not send students for tardies. We will have a procedure for late check-ins to 1st block. Tardies for periods 2-4 will be taken by the teacher and excessive tardies will be handled by the admin as in the past.

Parent meetings and conferences will be through technology--In-person meetings unless an emergency must be approved by an administrator.

Our expectations for behavior in and out of the classroom have NOT changed.

- Inappropriate use of electronic devices will be handled as insubordination, but we will not collect student phones
- Mask are encouraged and we will discuss which can or can't be worn
- Students should NOT be sent to the office for discipline issues unless there is an emergency or serious situation
- If you have a discipline issue that needs to be addressed immediately or before the next class change, an admin will come to your room when you call.
- We will expect students to be in dress code
- We will NOT let students borrow belts or clothes
- ALC and RAMP will be used

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.

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

No personal items such as cleats or clothes can be dropped off.

All visitors and parents must schedule an appointment to meet with an employee, unless an emergency.

It is possible that we will not have subs to replace teachers who are out. Teacher attendance will be vital to everyone's success and sanity.

We will have a full-time school nurse who will be on campus all day. Nurse Jessica Allen will have room C 14. Sick students, regardless of illness, will not be sent to the office. Nurse Allen will handle all sick students and medical emergencies. She will be vital in tracking students for quarantine purposes.

We will also house a mental health therapist as we did two years ago. She will be split between the OB and Center Hill schools. Her room will be next to Mrs. Hatmaker in the C/D split

- 1st block 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 OBHS 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, graduation requirements were revised for the Class of 2021. These adjustments were made to benefit the seniors in case there are closures throughout the school year. Graduation requirements will be consistent with the Mississippi Department of Education graduation requirements.
- 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 students will be held accountable for assignments and will be given grades regardless if they choice the VIP (full-time online) or if they choose to come to school, AND we are shut-down in part or whole due to COIVD.

As I said, some of these things are important for teachers to know and/or start planning for now.

- I will send this information to OBHS parents next Monday or Tuesday.

I am going to officially open the building to everyone this Monday so you can start collaborating and getting ready. Mr. Nichols will send a COVID email each morning for teachers to ask themselves. This email applies if you are on campus, not just when school starts.

Master Schedule.

- A tentative master schedule will be released as soon as possible. If there are major changes for last year to your schedule, I will let you know ASAP for planning purposes. The added element of VIP students has slowed down our process considerably.

There will be a Zoom training for Schoology on July 22. Only OBHS teachers will be involved. I encourage all of you to watch. I will send you the link as soon as I receive it. There will also be a training on our second PD day. Again, every teacher must become fluent in the use of Schoology. We may need it on day two.

Be thinking of how you can arrange you rooms to maximize space. Some of you will have to take a bookshelf or two home. If you have tables, students cannot face one another.

I want each of you to have the same high expectations that lead to our tremendous success last year. At the same time, remember grace over grades during this time. Dig in deep to your subject and challenge their minds but remember kids over content as we start school in the new normal. The mental health of our students must be considered and

addressed. We all got into this profession to help kids and this year will likely be the best opportunity of our careers to do so.

We cannot control many of the things we are dealing with right now, but we can, and must control our attitudes. Our job is to do the best we can under the circumstances and that's exactly what we are going to do. As always, be positive in everything you do, help everyone all the time, and give it your best each day. I can't wait to see you all in a few weeks. We will have a great year.

With much OB Pride,

Jacob Stripling