

Weekly Update on Planning for the 2020-21 School Reopening - July 6, 2020

In order to keep you informed regarding the planning for the 2020-21 school year and the details on how we will reopen, we will publish an update every Friday throughout the summer. Additional updates will be provided as developments occur and decisions are made.

As of the writing of this update, there are five weeks until school begins. We have been working throughout the summer to plan for whatever the circumstances regarding COVID-19 are at that time. We remain focused on providing the safest options possible that support the educational and social-emotional needs of our students and provide the appropriate conditions for our staff as well.

The Governing Board Meeting held last Thursday, July 2nd, included almost four hours of information and discussion related to planning for the reopening of school in August. The Board will be asked to make a decision on how we will reopen at the upcoming meeting on Thursday, July 16th at 6:00 P.M. We encourage everyone to join that meeting via Zoom, with the log-in details to be published on Friday.

Part of the information presented last Thursday came from a Parent Survey that was available for parents and guardians to complete prior to the Board meeting. Major takeaways from the survey included:

- Through responses to three different questions, between 70 and 73% of respondents want to have a physical return as part of the reopening, whether full-time or in the blended or hybrid model
- A distance learning option will be necessary for the families that will not have their child make a physical return to school
- Most parents will need specific information on the health and safety protocols in place to feel comfortable about returning their child to school
- The current trend of more cases in our area, and overall, may significantly impact families' decisions about a physical return to school

Another portion of the Meeting was focused on the current status regarding reopening in terms of requirements and guidance coming from various governmental authorities. Main points included:

- ❖ Requires a physical reopening of schools "to the greatest extent possible"
- ❖ Distance learning is allowed under only two circumstances:
- ❖ On a district or school-wide level on an order or guidance of a state or local public health officer
- ❖ For pupils who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction, or who are self-quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19.

Distance learning requirements are significantly higher than they were during the initial closure.

- ❖ Devices and connectivity for all students
- ❖ Grade-level aligned instruction substantially equivalent to in-person instruction
- ❖ Academic and other supports for students with disabilities, English Learners, homeless students, foster children, students needing mental health services
- ❖ Daily live interaction with teachers and peers, whether in-person or via electronic means
- ❖ Minimum requirements for instructional time will be enforced with districts failing to implement them facing financial penalties
- ❖ Daily attendance requirements for students will be enforced with accountability practices in place for poor attendance

Information regarding the guidelines from public health agencies was shared, with the recognition that what is being presented by the agencies changes frequently based on the number of cases and patterns of its spread. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC) will be issuing new guidance intended for use on a national basis later this week. The District is using CDC guidance as the primary basis for our reopening planning regarding health and safety planning. That planning is addressing, but not limited to:

- ❖ Social distancing
- ❖ Sanitizing and disinfecting
- ❖ Face coverings
- ❖ Health screening

There was lengthy discussion around possible models for instruction including full in-person, a blend of in-person and distance learning, and full distance learning. Draft schedules are being included in the email sent to parents, placed on the website, and posted with links to Facebook.

Safety protocols and practices were described at length and included the issues listed above, as well as other considerations. Again, we expect new guidance for reopening schools coming from the CDC this week, so we update our planning once that is published. As we have said in other updates and all of our other communications, we have a responsibility to make our schools and offices as safe as they can reasonably be made.

The final portion of the Board Meeting addressed issues related to our staff and their return to work. They are receiving direct communication from our Human Resources Department regarding their options if they have concerns regarding their health and return to work,

The Governing Board Meeting on July 16th at 6:00 P.M. is where we will ask the Board to make a decision regarding how we will begin the school year in five weeks. We encourage everyone to try to join that meeting. The agenda and information on how to log-in will be published this Friday afternoon.