

Archived Messages

7/31/20

Parents and Community Members,

First, let me say I hope you and your family are safe and healthy. Like everyone else in communities across the nation, we are adjusting to the drastic changes in life during COVID-19. We have been receiving regular updates about COVID. However, as the medical community learns more about the disease, this guidance changes quite frequently, sometimes day-to-day or even hour-to-hour.

As we deal with those ever changing guidelines, I want to extend to you my thanks for your patience and understanding. I am extremely appreciative of our students, parents, teachers, staff, and administrators for their positivity, flexibility, and resilience during these trying times.

Using the most current information we have at this time, our plan for delivering instruction to our students is listed below.

Opening and Operational Phase: Pending Board approval on Monday, August 3, our schools will start the instructional year on August 17. The next two weeks will be dedicated to parent/student communication with school sites, checking out of necessary technology, Back-to-School events, and parent engagement activities via drive through and virtual activities. We will open in our Red operational phase. Based on the data trends, and in efforts to offer consistent scheduling for parents, we will remain in the Red phase through Labor Day week, Sep 11. Prior to that date, we will communicate any potential changes to our operational phase.

Date	Activity	Notes
August 4-7	Introduction to the school year and virtual learning	Teachers will be interacting with students and parent schedules, set criteria for learning, meet with students understanding of virtual set up, and help all to understand classrooms will function
August 10-14	Staff Development (Tue,Wed,Thur), In-Service (M/F), training and make-up parent/student virtual training	Teaching staff will utilize this week to further develop and interaction across all grade levels
August 17 (Pending Board Approval)	Virtual classes continue	Please contact your school site regarding any questions start of the year the week of Aug 4

TN and HCS School Reopening Plans: Governor Lee released his plan for the safe opening of TN schools. We are adjusting our plans due to the statewide plan. We have made several adjustments, focusing on the concerns for our students who may not have Internet access and/or consistent support or supervision at home. Under our Red operational phase, all instruction shifts to remote learning. We are working with principals and teachers to try to open sections of our schools to accommodate small groups of students who may need Wi-Fi access and/or support with virtual learning, hands-on labs, and other support. This may be different at each level between elementary, middle and high school. Schools will determine these schedules and will communicate with you regarding assigned times to attend if necessary. We continue to develop this plan as we progress toward the start of the school year and beyond.

HS Fall Sports: The regional athletic directors met and have drafted recommendations for fall sports. Regional superintendents will review the recommendations on Monday and will decide as a region how we will handle: contact sports, protocol for positive cases, concessions, crowd attendance, forfeits due to illness, continuance of any sports while schools are fully virtual, etc. We will share the decisions regarding these topics late Monday or Tuesday morning.

Thanks,

Matt Hixson

7/23/20

HCS Parents and Community Members,

There have been rumors, conflicting information and lots of questions over the past week regarding opening and operating schools beginning in August. Here is the latest information directly from our system. Please monitor our website and pay close attention to the new buttons toward the middle of the home page. These buttons will link to the latest information, edits to our operational plan, and a new Question and Answer live document. Weekly updates will be emailed to staff and posted to the website. We will also post reminders to social media.

Operational Status:

As a reminder, we are utilizing the epi curves website from the Tennessee Department of Health, <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov/data/epi-curves.html>. However, I have asked our regional health to assist in breaking down current COVID-19 data relevant to our school populations, so that our decisions are based upon data affecting our students and staff. I will update you all with any progress. For reference, please review the wording from our updated plan below:

GREEN Level: Schools remain open, operating as normal with general safety precautions in place. Hawkins County Schools will enlist parents and community in assisting with ensuring student safety and health.

Average rate of active new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 County residents is five or less, over the last 14 day period (or as identified by school site).

YELLOW Level: Schools are eventually forced to alter educational models. Hawkins County Schools would employ a remote/in-person hybrid learning scenario. Under the YELLOW phase, our model would consist of bringing half of our students into our classrooms Mondays and Tuesdays, working with all students remotely on Fridays while we deep clean all facilities, and bringing the remaining half of the student population to classrooms on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Average rate of active new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 County residents is higher than six over the last 14 day period (or as identified by school site).

RED Level: Schools close to students on campus, and there are subsequent school/community-based closures. In the event of school closures, Hawkins County Schools would employ our remote learning plan, consisting of all teachers teaching students remotely in live sessions where possible. See

Average rate of new cases of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 County residents is consistently and substantially higher than ten over the last 14 day period (or as identified by school site).

Virtual Offerings in Hawkins County:

We are pleased to be able to offer two virtual options for parents this year.

Hawkins County Virtual Academy, HCVA, is a long-term virtual educational program in its second year. It offers up to 150 seats for those who wish to participate in virtual learning long-term, preferably for the 2020-21 school year. This is also offered for students who have internships, jobs, dual enrollment, early military entrance, etc. and who may need flexible instructional times.

Hawkins County eLearning Program, HCeLP, is a new addition, adding short-term and as-needed virtual learning options for students who do not feel safe returning to school. HCeLP is intended to be a semester-to-semester option and will be the platform we employ if we have to move everyone toward virtual learning during the course of the school year. Parents who wish to utilize this option will need to sign up no later than Friday, July 24. In the event Hawkins County Schools enters a Red

phase, we will employ the HCeLP for all students. With this in mind, all students will receive log in and account information at the start of this school year. Teachers and students will have opportunities to explore this tool within their classroom environments and at home once they have their accounts established. Any transitions to full virtual instruction will be easier if students are exposed to these tools prior to that point, if possible.

Masks:

Of all the phone calls and questions we have received, this tends to be the most frustrating for parents on either side of this topic. There are those who wish masks to be mandated for all staff and students. There are those who desire personal choice. At this point, we will provide masks for all employees and students. We are encouraging staff in the Yellow phase of operation to wear masks in all common areas. Student mask wearing remains a personal decision, one that each parent and student will need to make. We will make it abundantly clear that no matter the personal choice, we will act professionally toward one another and will expect the same of all students.

School Year Start:

As some have noticed, surrounding school systems have already started delaying start dates. We will open the school year on Aug 4 as planned, but will do so with virtual parent and student meetings and walkthroughs on Aug 4, Aug 5, and Aug 7. Voting will take place at many HCS school sites on August 6. We will clean all facilities in preparation for Monday, August 10, in the event we can open under the Yellow phase. Please look for information from your school site regarding the Aug 4 -7 events and the opening phase.

Students will be on site, if we are able to open in “Yellow” on August 10. Buses will run for those who will be on campuses on Monday and Tuesday, and again Wednesday and Thursday, for the respective groups. Friday, all students will work from home remotely.

Here's what has been updated. We will continue in class teaching for all PreK-2 graders at our school sites Mondays through Thursdays during Yellow phases. This group represents the critical age to establish strong reading foundations. The American Academy of Pediatrics highly recommends schools make every effort to keep students in school, especially those within this age range. According to the latest press release from the AAP, “the AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.” The Tennessee Department of Education agrees and has highly recommended the same. This age range is also the most difficult to effectively engage through

virtual learning. Therefore, Hawkins County will make every effort to keep PreK – 2 grade students in class, four days per week, separated as much as possible during any Yellow phase events.

Special Populations students will be given the option to receive their services and core curriculum in school during any Yellow phase event.

We are meeting with all principals on Thursday, July 23. At this meeting, many necessary details and schedules will be established. We hope to be able to release such details beginning the week of July 27. At that point, you will be hearing from your school sites regarding specific information. As you have seen, the information coming in daily can and potentially will require adjustments to our plans. We are trying our best to keep you informed.

Matt Hixson

4/21/20

Dear HCS Parents and Caregivers,

As announced by Governor Bill Lee on Friday, Hawkins County Schools, along with all Tennessee Schools, will remain closed to regular instruction for the remainder of the year. We understand that this decision will present challenges for our students and their families. However, we remain committed to leveraging our district resources to support families during this time.

I would like to take this time to thank all our staff who have worked tirelessly so our schools could provide meals to our students.

We are happy to announce that we will continue to provide weekly meals every Monday and Thursday at the designated school sites and bus routes through May 22. Please refer to our website for more information.

I would be remiss if I did not take this time to thank our curriculum supervisors, instructional coaches, and faculty for their dedication to finding the best learning opportunities for children during this difficult time. I can say, without reservation, that all employees of our school district care deeply about your children, you as families, and our community.

As we begin to transition from school year to summer, we will continue to work together to make the best decisions possible for our students, their

families, and the community. In that regard, I would like to share the following updates with you:

High School Graduation: Due to the large group gathering restrictions currently in place, we cannot set a date for graduation ceremonies at this time. However, we will be providing detailed plans to the Senior class and their families over the next few weeks. We currently have three scenarios involving delayed graduation or virtual graduation and will work with high school administration to finalize plans once we have more detailed information released to us from state government, the department of education, and state and local health officials.

High School Prom: Due to current restrictions on large group gatherings and health department-recommended precautions, we are cancelling high school proms for this school year.

End of Year Grades: May 14 has been established as the deadline to submit any outstanding student work. This is especially important for high school seniors looking to earn second semester course completions. All students will be provided additional learning opportunities beyond May 14 as we head into the summer months.

Check-

In Procedures: Each school site will schedule specific times to drop off any completed learning packets, turn in any uniforms or equipment, and retrieve any on-site medications. Please review our website at hck12.net for schedules and details at each school site. A parent message will be sent by school site as well. We will be looking for the following items at the site check-in:

- Library Books
- Textbooks
- Any technology-related instructional tools such as lap tops, Chromebooks
- Student unpaid meal charges

Kindergarten Registration: Online registration for upcoming kindergarten students is now open. Students must be born on or before August 15, 2015. More information about registration and the link to register can be found at www.hck12.net/kregistration

PreK Screenings and Registration: If you are interested in learning more about the Voluntary PreK program in Hawkins County for eligible four year olds, information can be found at www.hck12.net/earlychildhoodlearning.

As we head toward summer, please watch for additional resources sent out by the staff at your child's school site or by checking the student resource link on our website. We are planning a summer school program aimed at preparing students for next year. Please watch for more details regarding HCS Base Camp in the coming weeks.

Parents and guardians,
please take care of yourselves. I look forward to the day soon when school looks a bit more like it did before Spring Break.

Until then,
please know that I am here for you and proud to serve the students of Hawkins County.

Thank You,

Matt Hixson

4/16/20

Dear Parents,

Following the Governor's recommendation yesterday, HCS will remain closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. While this is not how any of us would have chosen to close out this school year, it is the right decision to ensure everyone's safety. Please watch for announcements regarding end of year events such as prom and graduation. At this point, large group gatherings are still not allowed. HCS administration will make decisions in the next several weeks regarding these events and any necessary adjustments. Please continue to emphasize the importance of learning with your students while we remain closed. Make use of the resources our teachers and staff have made available and reach out to your teachers with any questions.

Thank you for your patience,

Matt Hixson

3/24/2020

Per the Governor's recommendation this evening, March 24, Hawkins County Schools will now be closed through April 24, with a new target re-opening of April 27. Please continue to follow the CDC and local and regional health guidelines for ensuring your safety and those around you.

Matt Hixson

3/20/2020

- Due to the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) concerns, and in respect to President Trump's 15 Day Social Distancing recommendation, **Hawkins County Schools will remain closed through April 17, with a target return date of April 20.** At this point, Hawkins County has no confirmed cases. Rogersville City Schools will follow this same schedule in collaboration with HCS.
- We will continue meal service via our drive through feeding program at the identified six school site locations, daily, Mondays through Fridays from 11:30-1:00.
- We will continue to support our students through our teachers' efforts and those of our instructional assistants who are calling and maintaining contact during this closure.
- The Central Office and all services associated with central operations, will work split shifts, maintaining communication via email and phone calls. When not present at the office, employees will be working remotely from home in adherence to the President's recommendations. The office will be closed on Wednesdays for cleaning.

Sincerely,

Matt Hixson

3/16/2020

- Dear Parents and Community Members,
- This morning, Governor Lee urged school districts across Tennessee to close as soon as practically possible. Hawkins County Schools will be closed beginning tomorrow, March 17, through March 31, 2020.
- My staff and I will continue to work closely with state, regional, and local health department officials and will relay any updates affecting our school system operation beyond March 31. I appreciate everyone's patience while we continued to receive information regarding making the best decision for Hawkins County.
- I realize that school closures place a burden on many of our families, and I am pleased to announce we will be providing students with drive through lunch service at the following locations: Bulls Gap School, Mooresburg Elementary, Hawkins Elementary, Surgoinsville Elementary, Church Hill Elementary, and Clinch School. All lunch distributions will occur from 11:30-1:00 daily from Tuesday, March 17- Friday, March 20. Please refer to our website for additional dates we may be serving meals.

- Our teachers have also been hard at work preparing online and take home resources and activities. Please look for school communication with directions on how to access either take home resources or online materials. Wifi access will also be available during the week from 11:30-1:00 p.m. in parking areas at our designated lunch distributions sites. This will allow parents to download online learning resources.
- Again, please know we have taken the necessary time to develop plans dealing with a potential long-term closure and student and family resources leading to this decision. I will be in communication with you as we receive updates and make decisions.

Sincerely,

Matt Hixson

3/14/2020

- Good Morning Parents and Community,
- I wanted to provide all of you advanced notice of what we have in place, will be doing, and what I learned Friday from the Tenn Dept. of Health and the CDC. I also met with all regional directors, who all agree to the plan below. An important fact, as of this morning, the closest confirmed cases are in Sullivan and Jefferson Counties (one confirmed case each.)
- According to the Tenn Dept. of Health and the CDC, we are doing the right thing by reinforcing our cleaning efforts, keeping schools open and students in school, reinforcing hygiene practices, and monitoring students and staff. Here's what I learned today:
- **School Closure:** Closing schools as a proactive measure (prior to any identified cases within our system) has not proven to be effective in preventing the virus from popping up or spreading. This differs from the normal flu protocol.
- **Minimal Spreading:** Moderate community spreading of the virus resulting in low student and/or staff attendance will result in the CDC, Tenn Department of Health and the school system making a collaborative decision based on the identified cases and the amount of exposure. This may result in isolated school closures.
- **Widespread Transmission:** Widespread community transmission may result in schools closing in conjunction with CDC and Tenn Dept. of Health collaboration.
- We have taken and will enact the following precautions:

- Stringent cleaning of contacted surfaces within the schools and system offices
- Reminders to community members about the importance of hygiene, identifying factors (elevated temperatures, coughs, aches, etc.)
- We are cancelling all student and staff trips to identified areas with confirmed cases outside and within the state.
- Sports events held outdoors and those that involve head-to-head competition within our immediate region are permitted for the time being. Events that contain teams from outside areas will be cancelled.
- All travel involving large indoor congregations has been cancelled.
- Staff travelling outside the state and/or country over spring break will be asked to let their supervisors know where they are going (Tenn Dept. of Health and CDC recommendation).
- We will be cutting the perfect attendance programs immediately.
- We will be deep cleaning each room and facility leading up to the spring break and will ensure the classrooms are completely disinfected over the break.
- Many questions have come up regarding attendance. The state legislature is the only governing body that can make decisions to alter student attendance rules and regulations. Given the declared state and national emergencies, we may see leniency in these regulations. We may also see mandates for closure coming from our state or national leaders. As you know, details regarding the COVID-19 cases and spread change daily. My promise to you is to clearly and consistently communicate any changes to the above plan.

Sincerely,

Matt Hixson

3/12/20

Dear Parents and stakeholders,

- In light of recent Coronavirus (COVID-19) news and the fact that the Governor has declared a Level 3 State of Emergency, I want you to know we have and will continue taking precautionary steps to ensure student and staff safety. We have implemented stringent cleaning protocols at all sites, actively worked with and monitored student health practices, and posted health guidelines and resources. We are working closely with regional and national health organizations, like the Tennessee

Department of Health, Ballad Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as they monitor cases around us. In fact, we participate in weekly conference calls with Ballad and regional CDC personnel. Relying upon the expertise in these groups has greatly assisted with our decisions here in Hawkins County. As of this point, we have not had any confirmed cases in our county.

- In order to be prepared for the loss of instruction in the event of a school system mandated shut down, we have administrators and teachers at every grade level working on resources through Google Classroom, a resource already used within our school system. This would provide students with resources to continue their learning if schools are closed. Schools will also be ready to prepare paper resources for those who may not have access.
- We will do everything in our power to continue to provide safe and clean facilities and prevent school closure. Please make sure you are monitoring members of your immediate family for signs of illness. If you or a family member begin to experience symptoms related to COVID-19, such as dry cough or high fever, please contact the local health department or consult your family physician. As a reminder, please access the CDC website for more information on what you can do at home. <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Together, we will weather this storm. Thanks for the ongoing support for Hawkins County Schools. Please know that any decisions will be based on sound medical guidance that is focused on the well-being of our community.

Matt Hixson

3/6/20

Hawkins County Schools is actively monitoring the *Coronavirus (COVID 19)* situation to remain updated of current information, including review of guidance from national organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control, local health departments, and providers. HCS staff is working collaboratively with these experts in the development of operational plans to address any local impact that may take place. HCS will continue to engage in all efforts for the foreseeable future to proactively plan for the safest possible environment for our students and staff. Please watch for future updates as they become available

For more information regarding *COVID 19/Coronavirus* please visit the [Centers for Disease Control website \(www.cdc.gov\)](http://www.cdc.gov)