

# **Reopening Schools Q&A**

## **Updated JULY 23, 2020, 12:00 p.m**

### **Virtual School**

**Q: What is the cutoff for parents/students to make the decision of in-person school or virtual school?**

Students must be registered for the virtual option by July 27, 2020, 4:30 p.m.

**Q: Can Pre-K students participate in the virtual learning option.**

Yes

**Q: Is the virtual option more like an “at your own pace” type of program or will there be a specific time frame in place throughout the day? How will it be structured?**

Virtual school will be a combination of assignments, live instruction on Google Meet or Zoom, and there will be established guidelines for the pacing as well as due dates for assignments. The rigor of the assignments will mirror that of face-to-face instruction and the expectation for student mastery will also be the same. Each student will get a schedule of when their teacher or teachers will be providing virtual instruction. The virtual option will resemble the same time requirement of in school learning.

**Q: Can a student return to traditional instruction after starting the year with the virtual option?**

The commitment to virtual school is for nine (9) weeks. We will allow students to move from virtual to traditional at the end of each nine (9) week grading period.

**Q: How will virtual students receive extra assistance from teachers?**

If they are virtual, they will not receive any face-to-face instruction but help will be available through Google Meet or Zoom meetings with the teacher.

**Q: Can virtual students play spring sports?**

When students are on the virtual option, they can not participate in any extracurricular activities. If they change to the traditional schedule at some point in the year, they will then be eligible to participate.

## **COVID-19 EXPOSURE/HEALTH**

### **Q: Are masks mandatory or just recommended?**

Everyone is strongly encouraged to wear masks, especially in high traffic areas. Visitors must wear a mask.

### **Q: Does the whole class have to quarantine for 14 days if a child in a class tests positive?**

The school system will be in constant contact with the Department of Public Health and will seek their guidance any time there is an outbreak at school. When there is a positive case in class, students who are determined to have close exposure to the student will be asked to quarantine. While a student is in quarantine, all of their assignments will be available to them through Google classroom or sent home in packet form. There will be no penalty for the days missed.

### **Q: How long must students be fever free without medicine before returning to school?**

If a student has a fever, parents are advised to take their child to their physician and follow the guidance given on returning to school. If the child has a fever and tested positive for COVID-19, the following are the Department of Public Health guidelines (updated 7-20-20) the schools will use for safe return to school:

1. At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset and
2. At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
3. Other symptoms have improved.

Teachers and staff members who test positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms are to follow the same DPH guidelines. Asymptomatic persons with confirmed COVID-19 can return to school after:

1. At least 10 days have passed since the positive laboratory test and the person remains asymptomatic.

Asymptomatic persons who test positive and later develop symptoms should follow the guidance for symptomatic persons.

### **Q: What is the protocol if a family member of a student or teacher tests positive?**

If a family member the student lives with tests positive, the student would have to quarantine for two weeks, following the DPH guidelines. During the time a student is in quarantine, all school work will be made available to the student. There will be no penalty for absences.

**Q: What would make the school consider going to phase 2 (two days a week at school)?**

The hybrid model of going two (2) days per week will be used when it is the only way we can run our schools. We believe a traditional model is optimal, but getting kids to school even for two days per week is better than no days at all. Throughout this year, there could be times the school system has to close for short periods of 2-3 days, or possibly up to two weeks, depending on the guidance from DPH. There could also be times during the year we implement the hybrid model. We are going to start this school year off with teachers instructing students to put their assignments on Google Classroom and use technology under the direction of the teacher so they will be prepared during periods of closure to receive instruction via Google Classroom. The school system is prepared to provide internet access points and Chromebooks to students who need them if the school system must close for an extended period or more than two weeks or if there is another shelter in place order issued by the Governor.

**Q: Will the teachers and staff at all schools be required to periodically be tested for COVID-19?**

Right now there is no plan for mandatory testing of teachers or staff if they have no symptoms and have not been directly exposed to COVID-19. Teachers and staff are asked to take their temperature daily and not report to work if they have any symptoms or have been directly exposed.

**Q: Will parents be notified if there is a student or a teacher tests positive for COVID-19?**

If your child has had direct exposure to COVID-19, you will be notified by the school and/or contact tracers with DPH. We are in constant contact with our local DPH and they will inform us and/or parents directly when there is a positive test of a student or teacher.

**Q: How is it any safer to open schools now when a full graduation was not considered safe?**

As the principal of PCHS during the time the 2020 graduating class was in school, it was a difficult decision to have to limit the number of people attending the graduation

ceremony. I am grateful we were able to celebrate our graduates with a ceremony considering many counties still have not been able to do so. The Governor's Executive Order prohibiting large gatherings was the reason we had to limit graduation to six tickets so that we could hold the ceremony while the order was in place. However, the Governor has encouraged schools to reopen using enhanced safety measures where students will be in a classroom and not in large assemblies like a graduation ceremony. No school assemblies during the school day will take place this year. We have canceled our district-wide faculty meeting that takes place the first day of pre-planning every year to protect our teachers and have asked principals to meet with teachers in small groups instead of large faculty meetings.

**Q: What are the social distancing requirements in the classroom?**

Our teachers do an outstanding job in their classrooms, and they will do everything in their ability to arrange their rooms and student desks to distance students to the degree the space will allow. School administrators are currently working to ensure class size is as low as possible by making all classes as even in number as possible. We are following the guidance set forth by the GA Department of Education (DOE) as well as guidance from DPH and CDC. (See list of safety measures posted in response to a previously answered question July 22, 2020 below).

**Q: Was any part of the decision to reopen schools based on the president's threat to withhold federal funds?**

No, that was not part of the decision to reopen schools. Many parents in our community have expressed the desire for their child(ren) to return to school. Additionally, guidance from the Georgia Department of Education, GA Department of Public Health, and local health officials was used in making the decision to return to school. This is not a decision made without a lot of thought and careful planning on the part of school leaders to ensure we can reopen schools safely. The school board, district leaders, school principals, and school nurses have met to help ensure that we are all doing everything we can to provide our community a choice of safe face-to-face instruction or virtual learning.

**Q: How likely is it that our schools will stay open at full capacity for the school year since there has been a significant increase recently in COVID-19 cases?**

We are prepared to follow guidance from DPH regarding school closures. We will close schools if necessary and have a plan in place to ensure that instruction continues during short periods of school closures. Decisions to close school will be made with the safety of students and staff at the forefront.

**Q: Will temperature checks be done on every child/faculty member who enters the school?**

Each school will have several digital thermometers to check students/staff who appear symptomatic. We will also screen (spot check) student and staff temperatures to the extent possible especially at the beginning of each day. We ask that all parents check their child's temperature each morning before sending them to school to help us with this.

**Q: Why would we start with Phase 1 (traditional) vs. Phase 2 (hybrid) to accommodate the social distance guideline and not have a total shutdown again?**

We are planning traditional instruction with a virtual option to allow parents to choose how their students receive instruction. We have worked with the Department of Public Health (DPH) and have followed guidelines set forth in the GA Department of Education (DOE) 'Back to School Guidance' document to establish a safe plan for faculty and students. In our community, both parents work in most families and there is no one to keep their child(ren) or to ensure they are doing their school work if we would have chosen a hybrid model of attending school only two days per week.

Our teachers do an outstanding job in their classrooms, and they will do everything in their ability to arrange their rooms and student desks to distance students to the degree the space will allow. School administrators are currently working to ensure class size is as low as possible by making all classes as even in number as possible.

We are following the guidance set forth by the GA Department of Education return to school document as well as guidance from DPH and CDC.

Student and staff seating will be separated as much as room space will allow. (Spacing of 6 ft is optimal.)

Desks will be arranged so that students are not facing each other.

Teachers will monitor students for signs of illness each morning as they come into the classroom.

Thermometers will be made available throughout the building to check temperatures of students who appear ill.

Any student who does not appear to be feeling well/ has a temperature of 100.4 should be given a mask if they do not have one and sent to the nurse. The nurse or principal designee will contact the parent to pick up the student.

Teachers and students will be encouraged to wear a mask anytime they are within 6 feet of others.

Safety protocol is “soft lockdown” where doors stay closed during class. Teachers will make sure their doors are propped open during any class changes or as groups enter/exit to minimize the number of people touching door handles.

Teachers will use wipes and sprays that will be provided to disinfect student desk tops and chairs in classrooms frequently during the school day, preferably after each class change before another group comes back in, or each time your classroom becomes empty.

Teachers should encourage students to stay home if they do not feel well.

In addition, general operations of our schools will change to enhance the safety of students and teachers. Some of these general operating procedures are listed below:

Signage will be posted to communicate how to stop the spread of COVID-19. Signs explain symptoms, preventative measures, etc.

Masks should be encouraged to be worn by everyone in the building when social distancing of 6 feet is not possible.

Establish protocol for visitors and restrict nonessential visitors:

Restrict any visitors or parents from entering the building past the receptionist area as much as possible. When visitors are permitted to enter, their temperature should be checked and they should be given a mask if they did not wear one.

Screen students and staff temperatures to the extent practical: Digital infrared thermometers (no touch) will be made available in multiple areas throughout the schools in order to check the temperature of students and staff.

Isolate and send home students/staff if internal temperature is over 100.4°F (38°C)

Establish procedures for moving around the building that promote one way flow of student traffic as much as possible.

Establish lunch procedures and/or schedules that will allow students to distance at lunch to the extent possible.

## **General Operations**

**Q: Will the attendance policy be waived?**

Attendance procedures will be different for this year. Parents are encouraged to keep students at home if they have a temperature of 100.4 or higher or if they have any symptoms of COVID-19. We know this means that absenteeism will be up this year. There will be no penalty to students for missing school. We ask parents to screen their child each morning and keep him/her home if they are sick.

**Q: Will computers and hot spots be available for all children to check out if the children have to quarantine?**

We will provide Chromebooks to check out when necessary. Hot spots can also be provided in some cases.

**Q: Will lunch be consumed in the lunchroom or classroom?**

Each school has a plan to provide lunch safely to students. Stations with hand sanitizer will be available in all lunchrooms and there will be no lines where students touch keypads or utensils for serving. Elementary schools plan to provide social distancing in the lunchroom by rotating classes that eat in the lunchroom and in the classroom each day. The middle school will separate tables and provide additional staggering of classes eating at one time. The high school will separate tables and go to additional lunch periods to allow for fewer students at lunch at one time.

**Q: How will students get water at school?**

Water fountains at the schools will be turned off. At the elementary and middle school, each classroom will be provided fresh water each day in a pitcher that teachers will pour into throw away cups for students as needed. At the high school, the water fountains have touch free bottle fillers that will be operable. Students may also bring bottled water from home.

## **Athletics**

**Q: Football season has been delayed two weeks. When football does begin, will the public be allowed to attend home games?**

We will follow guidelines in any executive orders that are in place when football season begins. Right now, Governor Kemp has not stated what the new orders will be after the current ones expire. We will use the Governor's Executive Orders that are in place at that time, along with guidance from GHSA and the Department of Public Health to make a decision about how the stands will look at football games. We hope all Bear fans that would like to attend will be able to do so.

**Q: The current band stand will not take 100 plus students at 6 feet apart. How will that be handled? Will the concession stand be open? Will there be any regulations on what they can and cannot sell at concessions? If they are allowed to open, how many can work there with social distancing requirements?**

We will use the Governor's Executive orders that are in place at that time, along with guidance from GHSA and the Department of Public Health to make a decision about how the concession stand will be operated. We will work closely with the Band Boosters to ensure that we establish guidelines for the safety of concession workers.

**Q: Is the football team going to play away games and, if so, will the band go too? What are the requirements going to be for social distancing on buses for students and chaperones as one adult per every 10 students is required? Will these outings fall under the current no field trips rule?**

Right now a decision about who will travel to away games has not been made. We would like for everyone that normally travels to games, including the band and cheerleaders, to get to do so if it can be done safely.

**You can call the Pierce County Board of Education office at 912-449-2044 if you have any unanswered questions.**