



PLANNING FOR SCHOOL IN FALL 2020

UPDATE #2

May 26, 2020

***NOTE:** *This article is a result of the weekly discussions of the Pearland ISD Return to School Committee. This serves as insight into possible contingency plans the committee is preparing for. These are not being implemented at this time. As the 2020-21 school year approaches, definitive plans will be released.*

Realizing that the current COVID-19 pandemic has radically affected “normal” school operations, and that social distancing restrictions may remain a necessity next school year, Pearland ISD is planning to maximize educational opportunity by planning for 3 intertwined possibilities:

1. On-campus instruction to students - with required social distancing measures in place.
2. Remote/distance learning from home
3. A Hybrid system whereby students are both on campus in smaller numbers and learning through remote methods when away from school.

We have been continuously warned that surges in the pandemic or other realities may require further temporary closures or diminished capacities at school campuses next school year. Thus, we must be prepared for a combination of on-campus, distance, and hybrid learning next school year.

In our planning efforts, we have established a large “Return to School” committee comprised of leaders and advisors from each major area of district operations, as well as parents. Here are some of the major issues we are tackling:

TRANSPORTATION:

Social distancing requirements requiring far less students per bus will likely drive transportation decisions and in turn, daily school schedules. The committee reviewed various schedule options for all grade levels and how they would work with transporting students. If the “hybrid” model is needed whereby daily campus capacity is limited due to social distancing requirements, we may also have to limit or eliminate “paid” bus service offered by the district for students living within 2 miles of their campus.

SCHOOL SCHEDULES:

Planning school schedules includes “normal” scheduling as was in place during the 19/20 school year. However, if social distancing requirements limiting daily campus capacities are in force, the following schedule is being considered:

- Grades Pre-K – 4: Meet for a half day on campus each day (Though this poses an issue with childcare for the other half of the day.)
- Grades 5-12: Meet every other day on campus for a full day (i.e., M/W/F on campus learning and T/TH remote learning for grades 5-12; then switch the schedule the following week.)



For elementary students, we are determining how to teach PE, music and art in an era of required social distancing. For middle school, junior high and high school, the schedule will affect students who participate in athletics and extra-curricular activities especially if/when such activities are required to meet on campus each day. Game schedules may also need to be altered. As of right now, the impact of the pandemic on UIL competitions and extra-curricular activities is unknown and awaits guidance from state officials. (Summer strength/conditioning/practice rules have recently been issued by UIL and contain significant restrictions and prohibitions.)

After reviewing various bell schedules for each grade level band if the “hybrid” option is necessitated, the district will finalize deliberations in early June and share it with the public thereafter.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION:

Our C&I Department are working with teachers, specialists and others to develop more robust online learning. The goal is to design a system that is a seamless integration of the learning management software between the classrooms and at home. It is imperative that students are familiar with and using the software and technology available (Seesaw for PK-4 and Canvas for 5-12) in class so that doing so during a distance learning period is “second nature.” Technology must be further integrated into classroom lessons so that when kids are at home for remote learning it is as seamless and easy to navigate as possible.

TECHNOLOGY:

The district is examining the possibility of a 1:1 initiative – meaning that every student is provided a device (PK-1 would be iPads with keyboards; 2-12 would be laptops). This is a very expensive undertaking but may be necessitated if campus closures or capacity limits remain necessary. The initial cost for the devices alone is estimated at \$11 million – with additional personnel costs for maintenance and replacement above that figure. Some considerations will include: leasing vs. purchasing devices and the possibility of an annual fee for use of the device whereby parents/students may own the device after a certain period of time. A 1:1 initiative proposal will likely be presented to the Board for approval. We are also examining the possibility and cost of implementing a help desk/center to provide technology assistance.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Our teachers and staff must be equipped to optimize the online learning experience for students. Therefore, teachers/staff will also have summer/fall training opportunities to enhance their skills with the district’s learning management systems (i.e. Seesaw and Canvas), as well as ways to integrate technology for deeper, richer instruction.

FOOD SERVICES:

As decisions are made about school schedules, Food Service can determine best methods for providing and delivering food while minimizing health hazards. We will have to adjust on-site service and possibly offer additional curbside service at the same time (pending the approval of waivers by the Texas Department of Agriculture.) It will likely be necessary for students to choose food in the cafeteria; then eat it back in the classrooms or in areas where social distancing can be better enhanced.



HEALTH SERVICES:

We will ask staff and parents to conduct a daily self-screening. If a staff member or student shows any of the COVID-19 symptoms, they will be directed to stay at home. At this point in time, it appears counter-productive to mandate temperature checks for every school entrance because of the long lines and social distancing requirements necessary to do so.

We are also looking into providing air purifiers for each of our campus clinics to help mitigate health hazards in that environment.

SUMMARY:

There is still much to consider and a great deal of work to be done. We will continue to prepare for a “mix” of the 3 scenarios listed above. Our work continues through the summer and decisions will be communicated as timely as possible. Our goal remains to provide our students with a World-Class education despite the challenges we currently face. We know that with the dedication of our staff, teachers, parents and community, Pearland ISD will continue to provide the best for our students.

The superintendent and other key officials will participate in a recorded video Q&A next week, delving into many of the issues listed above. That video will be located on the district’s website, Facebook and YouTube.

Kim Hocott, Executive Director of Communications