

HCS School Reopening Frequently Asked Questions

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Don't see your question below? Please email additional questions to reopening@hcde.org.

Updated: Friday, July 24, 2020. Additions made in this color text.

Updated: Friday, July 31, 2020. Additions made in this color text.

Updated: Monday, August 10, 2020. Additions made in this color text.

General Questions about School Reopening

- Will I have an option to continue remote or virtual learning in the fall if I don't want to send my child back to school in person?
 - Yes. Hamilton County Schools will provide learning options for families in the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. The learning options are defined [on this page](#) and include both on-campus and remote learning models.
 - **Option 1**, the HCS Learning Continuum will provide on-campus learning based on a four-phased approach that is determined by local health data and information.
 - **Option 2**, HCS at Home will provide a remote learning option that allows students to remain enrolled in their current school but learn from home. HCS at Home is a semester commitment, and families can sign-up for this option at the beginning of each semester.
 - **Option 3** is the Hamilton County Virtual School, which requires that the student transfer from their currently enrolled school to this fully online platform. This curriculum is self-paced, relies heavily on family engagement, and is a full-year commitment.

- What are the registration deadlines for HCS at Home and HCS Virtual School?
 - HCS at Home sign up is available now until July 22. More information on how to sign up can be found [here](#).

- What will the first few days of school look like?
 - If we are in Phase 2 or 3, for on-campus, HCS Learning Continuum students, the intent is to hold the following schedule with students assigned as A-Day or B-Day students. This schedule will just be for the first three days of school:
 - August 12: A-Day, students assigned to A Days attend school.
 - August 13: B-Day, students assigned to B Days attend school.
 - August 14: Remote Learning Day, all students participate in remote learning from home.

- What if positive COVID-19 cases continue to rise before August 12? Will the plan change?
 - The School Reopening Task Force has designed a four-phased approach for reopening schools. The method considers the number of active cases in Hamilton County, along with hospitalizations and the number of patients in intensive care units in area hospitals, in determining how instruction will be delivered to students. For example, in Phase 3, all schools are open; however, short-term closure procedures will occur for COVID-19 affected buildings. These short-term closures may be followed by reopening with reduced on-campus hours (moving between remote and hybrid learning). The phased approach includes data-driven and safety-minded gating criteria based on COVID-19 case information from the Hamilton County Health Department, which can be found [here](#). The aim of this approach is, first and foremost, to protect the health and wellbeing of our students and staff, while minimizing the likelihood of COVID-19 exposure and maximizing in-person learning opportunities.

- When will I know the phase for the first day of school on August 12?
 - For family planning around the start of the school year, the district will set the phase for the beginning of the school based on the public health data reported on Wednesday, August 5 - one week before the first day for students for the 2020-2021 school year. We haven't begun a daily communication of which Phase we are in based on the public health data and will continue that through the 5th.
 - **On Monday, August 3, the district announced the "Safe Start, Great Start" reopening schedule that we will follow through August 28. We will launch the**

learning continuum based on the phase status beginning Monday, August 31. Details on the “Safe Start, Great Start” opening schedule can be found [here](#).

- What is the cadence of phase changes?
 - We will hold a two-week cadence for phase changes; meaning, if we transition from one phase to another we will remain in the new phase for a minimum of two weeks before transitioning to a different phase. It is also our goal to always transition phases over a weekend, announcing the phase the previous week and beginning the new phase on a Monday.
 - However, we also recognize that there may be a need to shut down individual schools or all schools immediately in light of public health data and on the advice of local health experts. School communities will be notified via School Messenger phone calls and emails if immediate shutdown is necessary, similar to closure notifications provided due to threats of inclement weather.

- How did you determine the Phases and gating criteria?
 - Our gating criteria are based on [local health data provided by the Hamilton County Health Department](#), including daily positive COVID-19 test results, weekly average positive cases, hospitalizations, and ICU occupancy. We constructed the threshold measures of our phases and transitions with the guidance and advice of the Health Department, as well as local pediatric medical experts. We review this data at least once per day, and post the current phase, the current number of active cases, and other considerations [on our website](#) on our Reopening Phase Tracker.
 - Other school districts in Tennessee are using similar gating criteria, including [Williamson County Schools](#) and [Sumner County Schools](#).

- What was the CARES money used for?
 - Our district used CARES funding for the following allowable expenditures:
 - Purchasing Education Technology - iReady licenses for all grades K-8; Chromebooks for grades 3-5; Classlink single sign-on for all students and staff; Nearpod software for grades K-5; camera and recording equipment for classrooms
 - Providing Summer Learning & Supplemental After School Programs including the Summer REACH program; Camp K program; and Future Ready Institutes
 - Planning for Long-term Closures - PPE; medical personnel (e.g. nurses); medical equipment; signage; communications
 - Addressing the Unique Needs of Special Populations- Assistive technology; ESL supports; OT/PT contracted services

- Providing Mental Health Supports - Whole-child learning curriculum; summer Family Hotline staffing; CARE team for student supports.

Health & Safety Plan

- Will kids have to wear masks?
 - In Phase 2 and 3, all students are required to wear a face covering except as noted below. In K-2, face coverings are recommended but not required inside the classroom. We will ask all students to wear a face covering in the classroom. However, we will allow some flexibility for our youngest learners who need to remove masks inside the classroom, as long as they are with the same group of students they work with daily.
 - A face covering is always required for all students and staff when outside of the classroom in the school building. The requirement includes K-2 students.
 - The only exception is when students and staff are in a well-ventilated space that will accommodate social distancing. To be clear, a typical classroom would not meet these criteria. A face covering will not be required when outdoors or in a large indoor space such as a gymnasium in which social distancing can be maintained, but it is still recommended.
 - Each school will provide a safe space and time during the school day for students to remove the face covering if they wish.
 - Please see additional guidance regarding face masks from the Tennessee Department of Health located [here](#). In light of this guidance, our Board attorney has suggested the following with regard to our stance on students and staff wearing masks:
 - *...The State of Tennessee has advised local school systems to require students to wear face masks except in certain specific circumstances, e.g., very young students, students with intellectual disabilities, and students with sensory issues do not have to wear masks.*
 - *While we understand that some people may not want their children to wear masks, we are bound by the guidance issued by the various agencies of the State of Tennessee, including the Tennessee Department of Health...*
 - *Until the Tennessee Department of Health tells us otherwise, we will be treating face masks as a required part of the school dress code in much the same way as we require students to wear shirts, shoes, and other appropriate attire.*
 - *...Willful non-compliance will be treated as a violation of the dress code with appropriately escalating consequences. Eventually, students may be transferred to a virtual school program.*

- Why are K-2 students not required to wear face coverings?
 - K-2 students will be asked and encouraged to wear face coverings. However, because of their young age, we understand this may be challenging for some of them, particularly those prone to touching or playing with the mask. Our medical experts have advised that improperly handling masks may create more significant challenges with the spreading of germs. For these reasons, we have provided flexibility for our youngest students to remove the masks inside the classroom, if more appropriate, to protect health and safety. To provide added protection in the classroom, the district will also supply plastic barriers for desks and tables in K-2 classrooms. Of course, all students, including K-2, will be required to wear masks in hallways, on the bus, and other indoor areas outside of the classroom.
 - We encourage parents and guardians of our younger students to begin preparing for the return to school by working with children to practice the appropriate way to wear face coverings and helping them to get used to wearing masks for extended periods of time.
- What is the consequence if a student refuses to wear a face covering? How will teachers manage enforcing the student face covering policy?
 - The face covering requirement in Phases 2 & 3 will be treated like part of the dress code. Schools will have masks available to provide to students who need them. If a student is in violation or refuses to wear a mask without an approved accommodation, their families will be asked to consider a remote learning option for their child.
 - During our Summer REACH program which began on July 13 at 25 school sites, we have not encountered problems with family and student adherence to the requirement to wear a face covering or mask.
- Will teachers and staff have to wear a mask?
 - The short answer: yes. In Phases 2 and 3, all staff will be required to wear a face covering, except when a staff member is alone in a closed-door room or in a large, well-ventilated area where social distancing can be maintained. For example, a large, well-ventilated area could be a gymnasium, atrium, or outdoor space. A classroom is not considered a well-ventilated area.
- Is there a mask/face covering exemption or exception?
 - Face coverings are required for students and staff in Phase 2 and Phase 3. Appropriate accommodations may be provided for students with special needs and staff with documented medical needs that prevent the wearing of a face covering or mask.

- We will work with employees one on one with medical conditions, but it does not automatically exempt them from face coverings. We will individually discuss their needs and work with them and their physician.
- The CDC does not recommend the use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings. Therefore, we will require cloth face coverings for all staff and students unless there is an approved medical condition.
- Will masks be provided for students and staff?
 - Yes, teachers will get a PPE kit, and students will be provided with face coverings. However, students and staff are welcome to provide their own face coverings that follow the district face covering guidelines, which will be included in our detailed guidance on July 31.
 - The teacher PPE kit will include:
 - 2 cloth masks per employee for the year
 - 10 disposable masks per student per month
 - 5 disposable masks per student for school stock
 - Face shield for specific teachers...e.g. Speech Language Pathologists
 - Non-medical grade
 - 5 gowns per nurse, multi-handicapped classroom, and high needs ExEd teacher (additional PPE as needed)
 - 3 boxes of gloves per nurse, multi-handicap, and high needs ExEd teacher for first quarter
- What screening measures are in place to ensure students and staff aren't coming to school sick?
 - All students and staff will be asked to commit to the HCS Pledge when attending school in person. The Pledge includes self-checking and tracking symptoms before coming to school each day. Symptoms include a fever, cough, tight chest, and other [common symptoms of COVID-19](#). Anyone in an HCS building that begins to exhibit symptoms will be immediately isolated, then the school's Rapid Response team will manage the situation using the "Sick at School" protocols.
- Are students and their families mandated to take a COVID-19 test before school starts?
 - No, students nor staff will be mandated to take a COVID-19 before returning to school in-person in August. We do ask students and staff to take temperatures daily and report any symptoms that could present as COVID-19.

- Does HCS have the ability to require a student to test for COVID? Are there any requirements for parents to report a positive COVID-19 case with their child? What happens if parents refuse to get a child tested and still send their child to school?
 - The public health department governs the reporting and enforcement requirements for confirmed cases of COVID-19. The district cannot force families to complete testing for themselves or their children. However, in the event of a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case, we can restrict access to our buildings.
 - We will be asking families who intend to participate in on campus learning to sign the HCS Pledge which does ask everyone to do their part to keep our staff, students, and community safe from COVID-19. Learn more about the HCS Pledge [here](#).
 - Employees are required to complete the HCS Safe Pledge via DocuSign [here](#). Employees have mandatory self-reporting expectations that failure to follow could result in disciplinary action.

- How should employees access COVID-19 testing?
 - HCS is partnering One to One, our wellness clinic contractor, to provide testing for all staff. This testing is available at no cost for any employee with confirmed exposure to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The employee must complete COVID-19 screen protocol via a School Health Nurse or HR referral.
 - YOU MUST HAVE A REFERRAL from School Health or HR to complete testing through One to One.
 - Do employees have to be insured through HCS to use the One to One testing service?
 - No, any employee can get tested through One to One.
 - Do employees have to pay anything for the COVID-19 test through One to One?
 - No, whether or not the employee has insurance through HCS, the employee will not have any out of pocket cost if you have confirmed exposure or symptoms confirmed through a school health nurse or HR referral.
 - Will I need to notify HR of my test, or will One to One let HR know that I've been tested?
 - One to One will notify HR of your test. Employees will complete a waiver to allow One to One to immediately release results to the district as the employer.

- If I am an employee and I get tested for COVID-19, do I need to notify HR?
 - Yes. If you get a test, you must let HR know. Employees should complete the self-reporting form [here](#) OR email humanresources@hcde.org.
 - Employees who have tested whether results are pending, positive test, or negative test, HR needs to know ASAP. The district needs to know about ALL employee testing.
 - Going forward, employees with symptoms or with confirmed exposure to a positive case need to be tested through our new partnership with One to One.

- What happens if a student or teacher tests positive for COVID-19?
 - See initial draft of detailed guidance for a positive or probable case and contacts located [here](#).
 - In addition, please see guidance for clearance to return to school, for students located [here](#) and for employees located [here](#).
 - The district will align to CDC contact tracing guidelines in terms of defining a COVID-19 "close contact" as any individual within six (6) feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes (with or without masks) and their recommendations for quarantine, testing, returning to work/school, etc. CDC guidance recommends testing for any close contact of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 and at least 14 days of quarantine even if that close contact receives a negative test result.
 - Our district procedures will be created in partnership with the Hamilton County Health Department and with the advice of pediatric medical professionals.
 - If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, expect the school to be closed temporarily for cleaning. Students will transition to remote learning and, in most cases, will return to a five-day schedule when the school reopens.
 - Any student under quarantine who is asymptomatic can participate in remote learning during that time.

- Will families and staff be notified about positive COVID-19 cases in their school? In the district?
 - When there is a positive COVID-19 case for an individual connected with a school, be it a student or a staff member, the entire school will be notified via SchoolMessenger call and email. This notice will include the plan to temporarily close the school to complete cleaning and begin contact tracing. This announcement will NOT include any details or personal information

- regarding the individual testing positive, as this is HIPPA protected medical data.
- Those who are confirmed “close contacts” of the individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be notified by the school initially, followed by contact from the Hamilton County Health Department to discuss specific quarantine procedures and recommendations regarding testing.
 - The district is planning to publish a dashboard of summary information from our symptom checker application, so that the public can be aware of general information related to COVID-19 in the district. We will release details for this dashboard when it is ready to be released via our website. However, there will not be any press release or district-wide SchoolMessenger for a COVID-19 case that only impacts one school.
- Will consideration to attendance for staff be made given the circumstances?
 - Please know that Human Resources will make every possible effort to accommodate staff members on a case-by-case basis; do not hesitate to contact Human Resources with questions or concerns at humanresources@hcde.org.
 - If I am exposed and am on a mandatory 14-day quarantine, do I have to use my sick days?
 - Staff will be given up to ten days of paid leave for COVID-19 related absences, per [The Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#). FFCRA benefits are available April 1, 2020, until at least December 31, 2020. Additionally, under the [Emergency Family and Medical Leave \(FMLA\) Expansion Act under the FFCRA](#), employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave if they are unable to work (or telework) because the school or childcare provider of the employee's child is closed or the childcare provider is unavailable as a result of an emergency associated with COVID-19. The childcare provider must be one that receives monetary compensation for providing services regularly. [FMLA leave benefits under the FFCRA](#) are available to employees who began employment with Hamilton County Schools no later than March 2, 2020.
 - What consideration was given to provide additional nurses at schools?
 - Our School Health Department is working with Human Resources to ensure all school buildings have access to a nurse. CARES funding has been allocated for this purpose.

- Will there be adequate sub coverage for teachers that need to take time off due to symptoms?
 - Human Resources is working in partnership with substitute staffing agency ESS to manage our substitute program. ESS is a leader in PreK-12 staffing as is responsible for the hiring, training, and placement of all substitutes. HR and ESS recognize and are planning for the challenges of hiring and maintaining substitute teachers during the COVID-19 situation.
- If an in-person teacher tests positive, will there be a substitute? Will a virtual teacher take over?
 - We will continue to source substitute teachers when the regular teacher is absent for any reason. We have been working with our substitute staffing vendor, ESS, to ensure they are prepared to support the demand for substitutes this school year.
- Will substitute teachers be limited to one school? What limitations will be put on subs, if any, in order to reduce exposure across schools?
 - Two substitutes will be designated for each school; schools are expected to call these two substitutes teachers first to fill vacant jobs. An additional substitute pool will be made available to each learning community if the two designated substitutes are unavailable to cover vacancies.
- What will be the requirements, if any, regarding faculty and staff getting tested?
 - According to guidance from the Hamilton County Health Department, there are no plans to require universal testing for students and staff at this time.
- What is a Rapid Response Team?
 - The purpose of the Rapid Response Team is to respond quickly to sick children during school hours, respond to a positive COVID-19 test of a student or a staff member, and communicate with parents and guardians when a student presents as sick or symptomatic or reports a positive COVID-19 test.
- What are the Sick at School Protocols?
 - As soon as a sick student is identified with COVID-like symptoms, the student is sent to the School Nurse. The School Nurse will triage the student and, as appropriate, isolate the student from others. If necessary, the sick student will be provided a face covering to wear, as tolerated. The student's parent or guardian will be contacted for dismissal and contacts identified for potential contact tracing.

- What happens if a child is sent home sick but we have to wait several days for them to get tested and get results back? Will the class (students/teacher, etc.) take any extra precautions during that waiting period?
 - The CDC guidance has defined the quarantine protocol for probable and confirmed cases of COVID-19. The direction is related to if the case subject is symptomatic or asymptomatic. The CDC guidance on contact tracing and quarantine guidance can be found [here](#).
- Let's say your child has chosen option 1 and is in school. But he has a runny nose and a little sore throat ... not so sick that he can't learn, but sick enough that he doesn't pass the symptom checker for Phase 2. Would he be able to log onto HCS at Home that day so that he can still not miss that day of learning?
 - We will be able to have students engage in remote learning and be counted present for the day based on new state guidance for attendance codes that permit remote learning to be recorded the same as in-person attendance.
- Will students be able to social distance in Phase 3?
 - In Phase 3, the risk level is deemed "minimal" based on the rate of active cases 0.1% and 0.5% of the county's total population. During this phase, our health and safety plan deploys mitigation strategies that include face coverings, hand washing, and enhanced cleaning protocols. Social distancing will be implemented where practicable, using all available space creatively, as well as by limiting large gatherings of students in gymnasiums, auditoriums, libraries, etc. Also, based on the number of students choosing HCS at Home or Hamilton County Virtual School, we expect there will be fewer students physically attending class in the building to allow for greater social distancing within classrooms.
 - However, in Phase 2, when the risk-level is "moderate but increasing," social distancing is a key mitigation strategy and is achieved by reducing the number of students on campus through limiting in-person learning to two days per week for most students.
- How will buildings be cleaned and disinfected?
 - The district has released a bid for enhanced cleaning services that define the requirements for cleaning and disinfectant services. Please see the details for the bid [here](#).
- What new safety measures will be taken in the classroom and bathrooms to ensure students are safe?
 - Please review the Health and Safety Plan section of our HCS Reentry and Continuous Learning Plan located [here](#).

- Cleaning - Will teachers be responsible for cleaning bathrooms? Will teachers be responsible for cleaning their classrooms?
 - No. The district has completed a bid process for enhanced cleaning services for bathrooms and classrooms detailed [here](#). All high touch surfaces will be cleaned three (3) times each day. However, teachers will be provided additional disinfectant and cleaning supplies to perform any spot cleaning as they see fit based on student contact and their personal comfort level.

Academic Plan

- Will there be an option for families who don't want to send their children back to school in person if schools are open?
 - Yes. Hamilton County Schools will provide learning options for families in the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. The learning options are defined [on this page](#) and include both on-campus and remote learning models.
 - **Option 1**, the HCS Learning Continuum will provide on-campus learning based on a four-phased approach that is determined by local health data and information.
 - **Option 2**, HCS at Home will provide a remote learning option that allows students to remain enrolled in their current school and commit each semester to participate from home. HCS at Home is a semester-long commitment.
 - **Option 3** is the Hamilton County Virtual School, which requires that the student transfer from their currently enrolled school to this fully online platform. This curriculum is self-paced and relies heavily on family engagement. Hamilton County Virtual School is a one-year commitment.
- If I already registered my children for school, can I still sign up for HCS at Home or Hamilton County Virtual School?
 - From now until July 22, **all families** living in Hamilton County will have the opportunity to sign up for HCS at Home or Hamilton County Virtual school. Directions for how to sign up can be found [here](#).
 - **After July 22, families should contact their school directly to discuss the Family Learning Options and potentially update their plans to participate in HCS at Home or transfer to HC Virtual School.**
 - **Families who opted into HCS at Home before the July 22 deadline are committed to remote learning through the end of the first semester. The next opportunity to switch to in person learning will open in December for the second semester starting in January 2021.**

- If a family chooses option 1, on campus learning, can that family change their minds before August 12th?
 - Yes. After the current ParentPortal sign-up form closes, families would need to contact their school administration to update their choice regarding the HCS at Home option. However, opting in later does limit the lead time for the school to plan schedules, and there may be fewer course choices available for students. We encourage parents to make their choice by July 22 so that schools can prepare for the best school experience for every child.
- If I start the school year with HCS at Home for my student, can I switch to in-person learning later?
 - HCS at Home is a semester-long commitment. If you begin the school year enrolled in fully-remote HCS at Home learning, you cannot switch to in-person learning until the second semester in January 2021.
- Is there a limit on how many students can enroll in HCS at Home?
 - No. The district will accommodate every student who chooses to sign-up for HCS at Home. Schools are staffed to support all students, regardless of if they are choosing to participate in person or via remote learning.
- What are the differences between HCS at Home and Hamilton County Virtual School?
 - For a quick overview of the differences, take a look at [this comparison chart](#). When enrolling in HCS at Home: you will be connected to your enrolled school – which is either your zoned, neighborhood school or your magnet/choice school; you can participate in sports and extracurricular activities through that school; the school creates the daily learning schedule for the student, offers AP and dual-enrollment courses, and offers the same curriculum as students will receive in the classroom; the student is also assigned a homeroom teacher. In Hamilton County Virtual School, the student is not connected to a physical school building, cannot participate in clubs or sports, and is not scheduled around the daily schedule of the school – the family is responsible for setting and pacing learning through the curriculum. More information is available at www.hcde.org/HCSatHome. A device will be provided in both settings, HCS at Home and Hamilton County Virtual School.
- Can you tell me more about time on task and screen time for HCS at Home?
 - HCS at Home students are expected to spend 6.5 hours per day engaged in learning, per the guidelines that the state department of education has set for an “instructional day.” Screen time will vary, but most students can expect a minimum of 2-3 hours of video lessons. Some supplemental lessons could

include computer-based work, depending on the assignment. *Note: Kindergarten students are only required to be engaged in learning for 4 hours per day, per state guidelines.

- If a student does HCS at Home, can some of the learning be done at night if the student's parent(s) works during the day? Is there flexibility in the learning schedule?
 - HCS at Home will be designed at each individual school site. The expectation is that students will be available during regular school hours. However, that time is not necessarily all synchronous, live interaction in real time. Families should contact their school regarding specific concerns about schedules and/or the need for more flexibility due to an individual family situation.
- What does the teacher interaction look like for HCS at Home?
 - In HCS at Home, students will have a mix of live and recorded interactions with their teachers. Teachers will have both recorded lessons and real-time small group work sessions.
- Will teachers be responsible for both in-school and HCS at Home students? If so, how will teachers engage with students online and in person? How will this affect their workload and planning?
 - HCS at Home is connected to your child's enrolled school and teaching duties will depend on the number of students that enroll in HCS at Home at your school. A teacher may have sections of in person and sections of HCS at Home students based on how many students elect the at Home option. Principals will work with teachers to determine schedules based on the number of students choosing remote learning, which is averaging around 25% of the district as of July 24, 2020. Principals will work with teachers to ensure everyone has manageable workload.
 - It is important to note that our goal is to achieve maximum social distancing in Phase 2 and Phase 3. With students choosing HCS at Home, this means that during Phase 3, schools will have between 60-80% of students on campus for five days. In order to reduce class sizes for those students attending in person, it may be necessary for teachers to share responsibilities for those students learning in person and those participating in remote learning. Or, if there are teachers who are dedicated to HCS at Home or students attending remotely, those teachers may serve more students virtually than those teachers who are only serving students attending in person. Regardless, principals will work with teachers and staff to create schedules and workloads that are reasonable, manageable and sustainable. Please see [HCS at Home website](#) for examples of how students

may be engaged throughout the day in terms of independent work and communicating with students in real-time.

- All teachers will continue to have at least 2.5 hours of individual planning weekly, as mandated by state law. In addition, teachers will have three half-day planning sessions per our 2020-2021 school calendar (September 2, November 11, and February 3). Moreover, the district has secured Content Demonstration Teachers for each core academic subject (K-12), selected CTE courses, and related arts courses for the year who will produce content and instructional resources that teachers can access for their in person and remote learning classes via Canvas. Finally, we expect that teachers will collaborate within school grade-level teams and across schools in learning communities to share plans and resources to support students attending in person and those participating at home. Our mantra this year is to “work smarter, not harder.” We have the systems, structures, processes and personnel in place to ensure that we will be able to manage the various configurations of learning that we will experience in the upcoming school year. Yes, it will be challenging, but we will meet that challenge through collaboration and division of labor.
- What about potentially live streaming classes and student privacy? Is allowed and what are the potential liabilities?
 - The district has consulted with the Board attorney regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and any potential concerns in the virtual learning environment. Our Board attorney has advised the following:

There is nothing within FERPA that prohibits visitors from observing a class... By extension, therefore, the USDOE has opined that virtual classrooms may have the occasional third party sit in and see what is going on without creating a FERPA violation. There are some limits, of course. For instance, the teacher would need to be careful not to share personal identifiable information (PII) or academic/disciplinary records over the platform. ...Names of students, system email addresses, etc. are directory information and may be disclosed during a class even if the parent has opted out of the disclosure. [\[Linked\]](#), [please find a slide deck from the USDOE's Student Privacy and Policy Office regarding FERPA and on-line learning.](#)

- In addition, our Board attorney has made the following recommendations to be included in student handbooks and/or orientation materials:
 - *Students should be prepared for class and dressed appropriately.*
 - *Parents/guardians should be mindful that, though the student is home, he/she is actually in class and that, accordingly, they should minimize distractions to the learning environment.*

- *Students should be given a quiet, private location.*
 - *Parents/guardians should avoid observing the classes so they do not inadvertently disrupt the class environment and to respect the privacy of everyone else in the class.*
- What is the school schedule for HCS at Home?
 - The school schedule for HCS at Home students will vary based on their choice or zoned school. If their choice or zoned school is 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., that is when teachers will expect them to be available for learning. Kindergarten students will only be engaged in remote learning for 4 hours per day, so their schedule will be tailored to what works best for them within the enrolled school's hours.
 - How will attendance be taken for students in HCS at Home?
 - Daily attendance will be recorded for HCS at Home using remote learning platforms that are monitored by teachers assigned to teach the course. We will release the HCS at Home Student and Parent Handbook before the start of school that includes expectations for attendance.
 - What are the parent expectations for HCS at Home?
 - In HCS at Home, parents are still expected to have students up and ready to learn each day as they would if they were attending school in person. Parents will not be responsible for teaching. Teachers will provide the structure and content for the day and support students when they need help understanding the standards being taught.
 - How can parents balance or manage multiple children in the household doing HCS at Home?
 - We realize that families have to consider many factors when determining their choice for family learning options. Though the COVID-19 global pandemic has caused considerable disruption to our regular routines and schedules, we are hopeful that families will be able to select an option that is workable for their unique circumstances.
 - Will my student lose their magnet, hardship, or open enrollment seat by choosing HCS at Home?
 - No, students that select to participate in HCS at Home will maintain their enrolled seat for the 2020-2021 school year, including magnet, hardship, and open enrollment seats.

- When will I know my child's A/B cohort?
 - All schools will communicate the student membership in Cohort A or Cohort B no later than Wednesday, August 5, for currently enrolled new students or returning students.
 - Cohorts will be assigned based on the student or mother last name. Families should contact school if there is any need to adjust cohort assignment to ensure all students in the same household are on the same cohort schedule.

- If we are on a reduced schedule, such as a Phase 2 A/B schedule, will all of my children be on the same schedule? What if they don't have the same last name?
 - Yes, if students are placed on a reduced in-person schedule, every possible effort will be made to keep all children of the same household or family on the same schedule. Families will need to speak with the administration of their child's school to make arrangements to align the cohort days for their children within the same or different schools.

- Will teachers be required to be in school on Wednesdays in Phase 2, A/B schedule, when all students are participating in virtual learning on Wednesdays?
 - Yes, teachers will be required to report to school buildings on Wednesdays in Phase 2. During Phase 2, there will be some students who will be attending on Wednesday for ESL or Exceptional Education support. The Phase 2 A/B schedule is to allow for maximum social distancing so that staff can safely continue to work on-site while mitigating the risk of COVID-19 spread.

- Will devices be provided to in-person students if we are in Phase 2, when three days are remote?
 - The district is 1:1 technology in grades 6-12 for all students. The district is implementing a plan with CARES funding to add 1:1 technology for all students in grades 3-5 as well.
 - For grades K-2, families are encouraged to use their personal device for students. The district will work with families in K-2 who do not have a personal device for their child to obtain a loaner device when in Phase 1 or Phase 2.

- Will my child still be able to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities if they choose HCS at Home?
 - Yes, as long as a student is in good standing with their HCS at Home remote learning and schoolwork, they are eligible to participate in their enrolled school's extracurricular activities.

- My child had a hard time with virtual learning. What support will be in place to help me in guiding his/her learning if we select HCS at Home?
 - Your student will connect to their homeroom teacher and have a much more structured schedule this year. We will also have additional personnel, such as counselors, other teachers, etc., at the school who will check in with your student to ensure that they have someone to help them stay connected and make progress.

- How does the district plan to support exceptional education students in a remote learning environment?
 - Information regarding how we will serve students receiving exceptional education services [can be found here in English](#), and in Spanish, [HCS 2020-2021 Reabriendo las escuelas - Preguntas y Respuestas](#).

- Will middle and high school students change classrooms or will the teachers move around?
 - Schools will make individual determinations about the specific bell schedule and class changes. Some schools may limit class changes for some students or courses. If there are class changes, students can expect a much more structured transition process, similar to the one-way arrows and controlled entrance/exit points in retail stores and other public spaces.

- What about the use of libraries?
 - **Libraries can be used with groups of 25 or less and with social distancing.**

- Will we have benchmark testing? State testing?
 - Our focus right now is on providing our students with high-quality instruction in a safe and healthy learning environment. We have not asked the state for a testing waiver at this time. We will communicate more about district benchmarks and state testing as the school year progresses.

- How will teacher evaluations be conducted this year?
 - We are currently focused on finalizing the reopening plan and ensuring the safety of our students and staff. We will communicate further about teacher and staff evaluations once we have successfully launched the school year.

Whole Child Supports Plan

- How can I prepare my child emotionally for the upcoming changes at school?
 - **Listen to your child's concerns about school and address them productively.**
 - **Contact your school for unknown answers to questions.**

- Prioritize affirming a safe and supportive relationship with your child.
 - Reassure your child that they have a support system (family, close friends, mentors, etc.)
- Identify your own stressors and responses regarding COVID-19 before providing positive/healthy tips for your child.
 - Your child will often take on your beliefs and feelings towards situations. Be positive.
- Develop a schedule and keep routines.
 - Set times for classwork, brain breaks and social interaction while practicing social distancing.
- Familiarize yourself with the school's plan for safety precautions and learning procedures then communicate this plan in advance to help your child embrace new routines for the school year.
 - What are the newly implemented safety expectations?
 - Where will your child eat lunch?
 - What days does your child attend school in Phase 2 - Hybrid Learning Phase? Is he or she in Cohort A (Monday/Tuesday) or Cohort B (Wednesday/Thursday)?
- Watch Whole Child Wednesday segments on hcde.org for more strategies on emotionally preparing your child for the new school year.
- My child had a hard time with virtual learning. What support will be in place to help me in guiding his/her learning if we select HCS at Home?
 - Your student will connect to their homeroom teacher and have a much more structured schedule this year. We will also have additional personnel, such as counselors, other teachers, etc., at the school who will check-in with your student to ensure that they have someone to help them stay connected and make progress.
- How does the district plan to support exceptional education students in a remote learning environment?
 - Information regarding how we will serve students receiving exceptional education services [can be found here](#).

Operations: Buildings, Transportation, School Nutrition, Sports & Extracurriculars, Childcare

- Will we have temperature checks before entering buildings and buses?
 - In Phases 2 and 3, all students and staff will commit to checking their symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, etc., before reporting to school or work each day. Schools will not be required to conduct universal temperature checks.
 - Since presenting our HCS Continuous Learning Plan to the Hamilton County School Board on July 2, our School Reopening Task Force has learned new information to inform our reopening plan. We initially intended to require schools to check student and staff temperatures daily during Phase 2, but after multiple conversations with health experts we recognize there are several reasons to not mandate universal temperature checks. First, not all individuals with COVID-19 experience a fever; in fact, children are more likely to be asymptomatic than adults. Moreover, the CDC does not recommend universal symptoms screenings be conducted by schools. Finally, taking temperatures of all students and staff may unnecessarily put some of our personnel in harm's way by asking them to be exposed, in close range, to a large number of individuals each day. Universal temperature checks may also cause crowding as students and staff wait to be screened.
 - With all of these considerations in mind, we will no longer consider requiring universal temperature checks during any of our Phases, including Phase 2. We will continue to use temperature screenings, as we always have, for any students or employees that report to the nurse's office feeling sick. In keeping with our HCS SAFE Pledge, we ask that parents closely monitor their students' health before school each day and keep students at home if they are ill.

- If we select HCS at Home for our student, can he/she still participate in sports, band, or other activities at the school?
 - Yes, so long as your student is in good standing with his/her HCS at Home coursework, he/she may participate in any sport or extracurricular activities being offered by his/her enrolled school.

- How will bus transportation be impacted?
 - In Phase 2 and 3: Students must sit in their assigned seats each day. Students who live in the same house are permitted to sit in the same seat. Drivers are required to disinfect buses between routes. Face coverings are mandatory for student riders, drivers, and attendants. A list of bus riders is

tracked daily to assist in contact tracing, in the event a bus rider or driver tests positive for COVID-19.

- In Phase 2: Bus rider capacity will be limited; as feasible, riders will be distanced by placing an empty seat between any passengers not of the same household. In Phase 3: As possible, riders will be distanced by placing an empty seat between any riders not of the same household.
- The district encourages families who can drive their child to school or carpool to do so, so there are fewer students riding on buses during Phase 2 or 3.
- How will we keep safe and contact trace students on buses?
 - Every person, including students, staff, and drivers, will be required to wear a mask at all times. Students will also be assigned seats to assist in contact tracing in the event someone tests positive for COVID-19. If a student continuously refuses to wear a mask on the bus, he or she may be asked to find alternative transportation to school.
- How will schools handle things like fire drills and safety drills with consideration to social distancing and sanitizing?
 - Fire Drills are an important safety provision for schools. They are required to be performed in accordance with state law. Schools should maintain TN Department of Health social distancing guidance during fire drills when possible and students/staff should wear masks existing the building. This includes maintaining separation while exiting the building, assembling outside the building and re-entering the building.

If a school utilizes a rotating schedule where all students are not in the building at the same time, the State Fire Marshal's Office recommends that drills be scheduled so all rotating groups of students and teachers receive the training and practice provided in a drill.

- If we are on a reduced schedule, teachers are concerned about childcare for their own school-aged children. Will childcare be available for teachers' children so they can teach?
 - We are currently drafting plans for childcare in a Phase 2 setting, and when select schools are closed in Phase 3. The current plan is as follows:
 - In Phase 3, all 35 School Aged Child Care (SACC) sites will operate before and aftercare as normal.
 - In Phase 2, when students are on an A/B schedule, all 35 School Aged Child Care (SACC) sites will operate before and aftercare as usual. Additionally, ten of the SACC sites will offer full daycare from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.; those ten sites will be open for all children who are eligible and need care.

- Preference will be given to HCS teachers if a lottery for Phase 2 SACC is necessary.
- Will front offices have a plexiglass partition to separate staff from guests?
 - Partitions will be installed in every HCS building that is open to the public and is expected to welcome guests or visitors.
 - All schools will receive a COVID-19 supply kit that will include:
 - 1 plexiglass barrier for each school office
 - 10 table/desk dividers per classroom for grades K-2
 - 1 plastic spray bottle per employee (disinfectant filled/paper towels provided by vendor)
 - Current bid for enhanced cleaning services requires wipe down of all high touch surfaces three (3) times per day by vendor.
 - Hand Sanitizer Dispensers. Allocation based on 1 per 25 students enrolled in school (Purchased from and refilled by vendor)
 - 10% stock per Bus: Based on bus routes
 - Appropriate social distancing signage for each school
 - Appropriate mask signage for each school
 - Appropriate other signage for each school
- Will the water fountain stations be open?
 - In Phase 2 or 3 scenarios, water fountains will be closed. Students will be encouraged to bring their own water bottles to school. If needed, students will be provided with water. More guidance for schools on how to safely provide water to students will be detailed in protocols released by July 31.
- If kids eat in the classroom, does that mean teachers lose their duty-free lunch?
 - No, teachers will not lose the time they are allotted for duty-free lunch. Arrangements will be made for students to eat in a safe environment and for teachers to have duty-free time. Each school will devise plans that ensure student and staff safety, while also upholding working conditions in terms of planning time and duty-free time.
- How will lunch work to keep students safe?
 - In Phase 2 or 3, we will be limiting large gatherings of students in places like the cafeteria. Each school will be designing their school-specific plan to manage lunch where students will likely eat in their classrooms or outdoor spaces (when weather permits) in a socially-distanced seating arrangement.

- When should we expect teacher devices - in terms of up to date laptops?
 - Teacher devices have been ordered and must be delivered and set- up before they are distributed. The IT team expects to begin receiving orders in September, and we hope to have all devices distributed before winter break in December.
- Will student devices be provided for elementary students?
 - We currently have approximately 5,500 student devices, for elementary grades. Using CARES funding, we ordered an additional 5,000 devices so that we can implement 1:1 technology in grades 3-5, which would mean we are 1:1 in grades 3-12 in our district.
 - We also have another 1,600 devices available for those students in grades K-2 who may need access. We are potentially looking at local funds and a state matching grant to purchase another 2,500 devices for early grades and replacement inventory.
- Will class sizes be smaller?
 - We anticipate that between 20 - 40% of students in each school building may take advantage of the HCS at Home program and attend school fully remotely. Therefore, our classrooms will likely be at only 60 - 80% of their usual capacity. Furthermore, we are encouraging principals to make creative use of their school spaces for instructional purposes - such as libraries and cafeterias - to allow for greater social distancing between students.
 - The district has submitted a waiver request to the State Board of Education to increase maximum class size allowances for courses/rosters that are 100% remote/virtual learning. The waiver request can be found [here](#).
 - These maximum class size increases are applicable to classes/courses/sections with teachers who are 100% dedicated to remote/virtual learning students only. Meaning, that teacher is not responsible for any in person students during that class/section.
 - The rationale for the virtual/remote class size waiver is to allow slightly larger maximum class sizes for teachers who are assigned to only support HCS at Home or HC Virtual School classes. This allows for teachers with in person classes to have smaller classes with in person students for social distancing, as well as other health and safety practices.
 - It would be inappropriate and not permitted (under the waiver) to increase beyond standard maximum class sizes for teachers who have combined sections/classes of HCS at Home AND in person students. If principals are distributing HCS at Home students across all teachers in a grade-level/course, then standard maximum class sizes remain in

effect. This is because all teachers will have smaller in person classes as some of the students on their typical roster will be participating remotely via HCS at Home.

- How should I prepare my classroom for students? If I currently use tables, will I need to have desks brought in? Am I allowed to have a carpeted space? What objects are not allowed?
 - The classroom environment will require adjustments due to COVID-19. There are many materials and spaces within a classroom that could hold germs for several days. These items are also difficult to clean. These items include rugs, pillows, stuffed animals, puppets, etc. Although these are things teachers use to create a positive and nurturing atmosphere, they are safety risks during a pandemic. It is recommended these items and any other soft surface items are removed from the classroom.
 - We will still be using tables in classrooms. Teachers are not required to convert their rooms from tables to desks. The district will be providing plastic partitions for all K-2 classrooms for both tables and desks.
- Will you do away with communal supplies in the classroom?
 - Classrooms also provide many opportunities for sharing materials and spaces as we teach and practice important social skills. To reduce the potential spread of the virus, group sharing of materials is discouraged. This includes writing utensils, paper, glue, scissors, etc. Teachers should plan for each student to have his/her own learning materials. Regarding other materials such as math manipulatives, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends replacing soft covered, porous materials with easy to clean surfaces such as plastic. Materials used by more than one child must be sanitized after each use.
 - Students should keep their personal belongings separated.