



EDMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Empowering all students to succeed in a changing society

July 28, 2020

Dear EPS Families and Staff,

A short time ago, in a special meeting, the Board of Education approved the 2020-2021 school year reopening plan for all students. The plan calls for students to start the 2020-2021 school year by attending in-person classes two days a week and taking remote classes three days a week.

Known as a blended model of instruction, this learning option aligns with the newly-released Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) School Safety Protocols wherein districts in counties with greater COVID-19 outbreaks, including Oklahoma County, are strongly encouraged to transition to alternative schedules (A/B weeks, rotations, hybrid model, etc.) to reduce the number of individuals in school buildings and ensure greater social distancing. In this scenario, students will only attend school in person on assigned days.

We recognize a blended model of instruction will be a hardship for some families and staff members. I want to assure you that district administrators and school board members did not arrive at this decision easily. Over the last several weeks we have carefully studied the COVID-19 data, engaged in numerous meetings and communications with stakeholders, and consulted with the State Department of Education, and health agencies and experts. We concluded that we cannot safely reopen schools without significantly reducing the student population in each building.

Starting school with a blended model of instruction allows the district to accomplish the following:

- Reduce by half the number of students in school buildings and on buses to better ensure social distancing
- Keep class sizes more manageable for teachers (and a limited pool of substitutes) who will have numerous new procedures and safety precautions to learn and execute
- Ensure some time in the classroom for students to collaborate face-to-face on learning, projects and lab activities
- Provide elementary students crucial face-to-face instruction on mastering the new Canvas Learning Management System

A blended model of instruction involves splitting each school site's student population into an A and B group. Attention will be given to make sure students

from the same family are assigned the same days. Parents will be notified if their child is on the A or B schedule by August 11.

Schedule Example:

Group A

Monday and Tuesday

In person, at school

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

Remote Learning

Group B

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

Remote Learning

Thursday and Friday

In person, at school

No general education students will be in the buildings on Wednesday. This will be a day for teachers to build their Canvas lessons, contact students, and for cleaning and disinfecting the buildings between groups of students. The remote learning that will take place during a blended learning scenario will be provided by the classroom teacher through Canvas. It is important to point out that grades and attendance will be taken, even on remote learning days, and that the remote learning portion is not optional.

There are exceptions to the blended model of instruction that may apply to students with disabilities who are unable to receive instructional services through remote learning. Placement, and district services for these students, will be carefully decided by each school site's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Accommodation Plan team. Special education personnel will be reaching out to families of children with disabilities by August 12th to schedule an IEP team meeting prior to the start of school.

We know this announcement will produce questions. Which schedule will my child receive? How will transportation schedules be handled? Will free and reduced meals be served on remote learning days? There are many details still to be ironed out and district staff members are working hard to provide those answers to school sites so that they can, in turn, provide them to you.

To assist us in this area, the board also approved tonight pushing the start of school by one week and beginning the 2020-2021 school year on Thursday, August 20. The extra week will be needed to reconfigure student schedules, train teachers, set up IEP meetings with parents, configure digital devices, and rebalance staff for our Virtual Edmond option.

Please know that we will be revisiting the reopening plan often to ensure that we are doing everything possible to give our students the best education while also providing sufficient safeguards for students and staff alike. At some point in time, we may move to a more restrictive or less restrictive teaching model if the COVID-19 data changes. Scientific understanding of the novel coronavirus is increasing rapidly, so efforts to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 will necessarily evolve with additional research and experience.

In the coming weeks, everyone in the district will be required to adapt to new schedules, procedures, and day-to-day school operations. Change of this magnitude can be hard and is oftentimes scary. That's why I implore you to treat one another

with kindness and respect during this difficult time. Let's work together to find solutions to the challenges that lie ahead and show our students how to respond to demanding circumstances with grace and resilience.

Until my next communication, please take care of yourself and each other.

Sincerely,

Bret Towne

Superintendent

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