

Charleston Public Schools
Back to School Questions and Answers

July 9, 2020 Update: Governor Asa Hutchinson announced today that school will not start until August 24th.

The Charleston School District is actively planning the 2020-21 school year in accordance with the Arkansas Ready for Learning Plan issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to re-open August 13, 2020. The District will also thoroughly review information provided by the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH).

In an effort to answer many of the questions you have in relation to the 2020-21 school year, we are releasing the information below with the understanding that it is a fluid time with continued updates and directives from the ADH and DESE. The information included in this document is based on what we know today and is subject to change. We will continue to give you updates as they are available. If you have any questions, please feel free to email Melissa Moore at mmoore@tigersmail.org.

What are some key definitions?

Blended Learning – This is learning where students attend traditional on-site instruction, but should closure be necessary, transition to learning from home.

Virtual Learning – This is an online curriculum platform. The student will not attend any on-site classes but must be supported by a parent or guardian at home and must have adequate access to internet service. For more information contact Melissa Moore at 479-965-7160 or email at mmoore@tigersmail.org.

What is the first day of school for our students?

School will begin on August 13, 2020 as originally planned. This date will only change if ADH sends updated guidance, but this is not anticipated.

Will Open House Nights be different?

We are working on alternatives for Open House. We will send out more information when plans are finalized.

Will bus transportation be provided?

Yes, the district's transportation department will follow its traditional route model. All students will be required to wear face coverings when riding the bus. We are planning no changes to bus schedules or bus stops.

What will the school day look like?

It is our intent to keep the school day as normal as possible for every student. Every effort will be made to reduce group sizes and transitions. Recess, lunch times, and special classes will continue with some modifications of student numbers and adequate cleaning between class periods.

Will children and teachers wear masks?

At this time, our plan is for all Faculty, Staff, Middle School students and High School students to wear masks. Exceptions may be made when 6 ft. social distancing can be maintained or when students have underlying issues.

Do I need to provide masks for my child?

The district will provide masks for children who arrive without them. Parents are welcome to provide their own masks for their child/children.

Will social distancing be observed?

Social distancing will be observed as much as feasibly possible, but at times students will be closer than the recommended 6 feet. When social distancing requirements cannot be maintained, students, 5th grade and above will be expected to wear face coverings. Classroom space and cafeteria spaces will be set up to increase the space between students as much as possible.

Will students, parents, staff be screened before entering the building?

Parents will be asked to do a home screening every morning with their child. More information will be sent before school starts in August. Staff members will self-screen. In the event that a child or staff member presents with symptoms, they will not be allowed to attend school until they have been cleared by a physician or the school nurse.

Will parents/visitors be allowed in the school building?

Though the Charleston School District has always welcomed parents in our buildings, at this time with the current guidance, parents and visitors will not be allowed in the buildings, including the cafeteria. We will discontinue large group gatherings such as Rise-n-Shine, assemblies and pep rallies, etc., until we can safely resume the events.

What will happen if a student comes to school sick?

Our staff and school nurses will have the necessary training to ensure your child's safety. If a child shows up at school exhibiting signs of fever, cough, sore throat, the student will be sent home and will need to be fever free for 48 hours without medication before returning to school. When the child returns to school, they must be approved for re-entry by the school nurse.

If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, what happens?

In the event a student or teacher on our campus tests positive, we will follow the latest guidance from ADH. We will be in direct contact with ADH and those individuals who need to be contacted under the contact tracing guidelines will receive proper notification.

How will we fill gaps from content missed last year?

Curriculum teams have worked to review the essential standards that need to be taught from last year. These key concepts will be woven into new learning and mastery will be assessed. Students will also take early assessments in September to pinpoint student needs and guide daily instruction.

What attendance changes do I need to be aware of?

Children will need to attend school daily as they have in the past. In the event of illness, the school will work with the family for online learning options. There will be no attendance incentive programs or semester test exemptions based on attendance. Students who are placed in virtual learning will not attend school onsite.

If I don't want my child to return to face to face instruction on August 13th, what are my options?

Full time virtual learning is an option for students or families with medical concerns or other qualifying reasons for not returning to face to face instruction. Virtual learning can be effective with strong parental support at home. However, this type of learning is not for everyone and cannot replace face to face interaction with teachers and peers.

What is fulltime virtual learning?

Fulltime virtual learning is an online curriculum platform. The child will not attend any onsite classes but must be supported by a parent or guardian at home, and must have adequate access to internet service. For more information, contact Melissa Moore at 479-965-7160 or by email at mmoore@tigersmail.org.

How will special services be supported during online learning?

The district is prepared to accommodate students through both onsite and offsite instruction. Students will receive zoom or tele-services as well as necessary accommodations as outlined in their 504 or IEP plans.

What happens if we have another school closure for a prolonged period?

Instructional leaders throughout the district are working on digital learning platforms to ensure seamless blended learning as the need arises to pivot from face to face instruction to online instruction. Every student will have a google account to access online learning. Teachers will spend time in the school day training students on how to access the content, as well as giving students time to practice use of the online platform. Online learning will continue to follow the same face to face pacing guide and will deliver new learning as well as practicing previously introduced concepts.

Will students be able to participate in extracurricular activities and sports this fall?

Yes, our athletes returned to campus in early June to begin conditioning and practice. We anticipate sports activities in the fall with possible modifications as directed by the ADH and the Arkansas Activities Association.

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