

September 25, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we finish up the first four weeks of the school year, I would like to thank you for the important role you've played in supporting your children's participation in the District's remote learning plan. We know that remote learning is a significant change from typical schooling for you and your loved ones. Your partnership is a key component to our success.

As we settle into a new school year, I am sure the question on everyone's mind is when our schools will begin to reopen for in-person learning. At last night's meeting, the District 73 Board of Education discussed next steps toward implementing a hybrid approach to teaching and learning, with students participating in both an at-home and on-campus learning model.

The decision to return students to school settings must be driven by health and safety considerations. We prioritize the health and safety of staff and students using guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and both local and national public health entities. We are currently aligning our decision-making process with metrics associated with the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium. These metrics identify mild, moderate, and substantial community spread parameters, and are aligned with instructional model recommendations for schools.

At present, the metrics correspond to a hybrid model. While this is subject to change based on infection rates and other factors, the District has developed a preliminary plan to gradually transition groups of students to in-person instruction, starting with the District's youngest learners. We will continue to offer an option for students to remain fully remote. A **tentative timeline** for phasing in students to in-person learning is below.

October 26: Early Childhood Students Return to Learning (Hybrid Model)

November 9: Pre-K Students and K-2 Students in Self-Contained Special Education Return to Learning (Hybrid Model)

November 30: All K-2 Students and 3-8 Students in Self-Contained Special Education Return to Learning (Hybrid Model)

January 4: All 3-8 Grade Students Return to Learning (Hybrid Model)

For everyone's safety and protection, the District's in-person learning option would follow specific IDPH guidelines, including:

- Require the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks;
- Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space;
- Require that social distancing (6 feet) be observed at all times, including on buses;
- Require that schools conduct symptom screenings, or require that individuals self-certify that they are free of symptoms before entering school buildings;
- Require an increase in school-wide cleaning and disinfection.

The plan is still a work in progress. Our Return to Learning Committee is continuing to work through various details, such as transportation, staffing, and preparing classrooms to meet the six-foot social distancing rule. Outlines of each phase will be presented for review at Board meetings on October 15, November 12, and December 10. The meetings will be livestreamed and recorded.

I realize that some parents will be satisfied with this approach and timeline, while others may not. In making decisions, I would like to stress that the health and safety of our students and staff are our top priorities. I am grateful to students, parents, teachers, staff, and the Hawthorn community as a whole for their ongoing support and patience during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Peter Hannigan, Ed.D
Superintendent