



September 11, 2020

Parents,

I want to thank you for your patience during these difficult times. I have received many e-mails as have our school administrators and instructional team. While you may not receive a return email or phone call in all instances, please know we are receiving your communications, and we are working diligently to resolve issues, consider feedback, and refine our processes. I will continue to send frequent communications to address questions and provide updates.

As we have said many times, conducting school during the pandemic is a very fluid and flexible situation. We're continuously faced with challenges and changing circumstances, but we are committed to mindful planning, continued communications, and making informed decisions about the course of our school year. Please remember everyone has a part in mitigating the spread of the coronavirus. Let's all work together in the "Pelham Way" to continue our school year and provide as much normalcy as possible for our students.

Today marks the end of 3.5 weeks of school on our staggered schedule, and we are monitoring data related to COVID cases and quarantines in our system. As of this afternoon, we have 0.3% of our traditional/blended students who are currently identified as COVID positive, and 1.0% of our staff. The percentage of students in quarantine is 3.0%. The percentage of staff in quarantine is 3.3%. Quarantine numbers are higher because quarantine occurs when a student or staff member has COVID symptoms, a positive test, or is identified as a close contact of someone with symptoms or a positive test.

We are also taking individual school data into consideration to guide our decision making. Based on the data, I am ready to announce some changes to our current plans. I realize the decision to change course will be met with varying degrees of opinion, but it is time to press on in certain situations and to be more cautious in others. Our change of plans include:

**Pelham Oaks Elementary and Pelham Ridge Elementary**

Beginning Monday, September 21, both elementary schools will return to a five-day per week schedule for traditional students. The Extended Day Program will not be offered at this time. We will evaluate the feasibility of the program after the first semester.

**Pelham Park Middle School**

Beginning Monday, September 21, PPMS will return to a four-day per week schedule for traditional/blended students. Students will attend school on campus Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Wednesday will be an E-learning day at home.

## **Pelham High School**

At the current time, PHS does not meet our established benchmark of being less than 5% of students in quarantine. Therefore, PHS will continue on the staggered schedule for traditional/blended students until the quarantine numbers are reduced. The data will be monitored closely and changes will be announced when appropriate.

Please review the FAQs below for more information, especially if you have concerns about returning to school and want to consider remote learning as an option for your student(s).

Sincerely,

Dr. Scott Coefield  
Superintendent  
Pelham City Schools

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## **FAQs**

### **Will students be able to socially distance and follow the 6 / 15 rule?**

In most situations, it will not be possible for students to maintain the 6 / 15 rule from other students on the 4 or 5 days per week schedule. There is an increased chance of exposure and possible quarantines. Mitigation efforts like masks, at-home wellness checks, personal hygiene, and cleaning will become our main defense for limiting the spread of the virus. We will be asking our teachers to maintain 6 feet of social distancing between themselves and students.

### **Will PCS set dates to re-evaluate this situation? Is a return to the staggered schedule a possibility?**

COVID data is reviewed daily and weekly. We do anticipate our quarantine percentages to increase upon the return of all traditional learners. We would likely return to a staggered schedule if our percentage of quarantined students moved to the 10% - 15% range, but we will also be evaluating the number of reported positive COVID cases. Remember that students can be quarantined for exposure and symptoms and not be COVID positive. Data related to staff will also be a factor to consider. Please know that PCS had requested "trigger" data to assist in our decision-making process, but no such data exists from the Alabama Department of Public Health. Therefore, PCS will be utilizing our best judgment in making these decisions. If any change in the schedule for traditional/blended students is necessary, our goal is to provide a week's notice before changes go into effect.

### **Why is PPMS only returning to 4 days a week and not going on Wednesday?**

Unlike at the elementary level, PPMS and PHS do not have designated remote teachers. Because teachers often teach different classes and even different grade levels, keeping all students on the teacher's original rosters was necessary. Therefore, PPMS and PHS teachers are responsible for both their traditional students who come to school and the remote learners. In our first few weeks, we have realized the need to strike some sort of balance, and our teachers need some time to provide support for remote learners, who make up around 40% of our students. Wednesday will be a day dedicated for those teachers to provide feedback and guidance to our remote students. When PHS moves away from the staggered schedule, they will also utilize the four-day schedule.

**We feel like more support and teacher contact is needed for remote learners. Will this increase?**

Each school will be sending some revised remote learning guidelines based on things we have learned since the start of school. Please take the time to review the information and direct any questions to the student's teacher(s) and school administration, if necessary. Please remember that students participating in remote learning, especially young learners, will require support within the home to be successful. Remote learning may not be the best choice for all families.

**Will traditional learning return to "normal" or will we continue to use online learning platforms and resources like Google Classroom and Edgenuity?**

Yes, we will continue to utilize a variety of resources to provide instruction during this complex situation. We are aware of concerns and issues. Many have been resolved, while others are a work in progress, and we will continue to adjust throughout the year. Some parents have stated, "we signed up for traditional learning, and this is not what we signed up for". That is a fair statement, but please consider this is not a traditional, normal year. Our teachers at PPMS and PHS are teaching traditional students on a staggered schedule, remote students, and traditional students who are quarantined or COVID positive. Additionally, we have to consider the possibility of teacher absences due to sickness and/or quarantine. These online learning platforms are being utilized to create a consistent approach that can be utilized regardless of the situation, even in the case of a total school closure. Although we want a traditional experience for our students and staff, this school year will be different for everyone. We are planning for many circumstances, facing many issues, and dedicated to working through challenges and evolving situations. Our expectation is that teachers will engage with our students and utilize these resources to enhance their teaching. It is new for all of us, including our teachers. We are resolving problems and making improvements each week. Please be patient, communicate with your teacher and principals, and let's work through it together.

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**Important Links**

[Child Nutrition Program](#)

For the latest news and updates about student meals in our cafeterias, pick up meals information and pre-order forms, distribution locations, etc. please click here.

[Learning Platforms & Instructional Technology](#)

Visit the Instructional Technology Resources Website for information on a variety of practical tips and topics related to our online learning platforms. The website content includes useful help documents, tutorials, videos, and other interactive resources to address the most frequently asked questions and common troubleshooting topics asked by parents and students. Plus, information about how to access the Technology Help Center. You can also submit your questions and our instructional team will work to provide resources and support for your requests.

[COVID Symptoms & Quarantine Guidance](#)

Screening guidelines and other details related to students who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms at school, self-quarantine, and return to school criteria.