

# PRESS ON

**OUR PROPOSED PLAN TO MOVE FORWARD,  
EVOLVE LEARNING OPTIONS, AND RETURN TO  
SCHOOL WITH A FOCUS ON HEALTH & SAFETY**

July 16, 2020



**PELHAM CITY SCHOOLS**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) released the "[Roadmap to Reopening Schools](#)" on June 26. Although the document provides a framework for planning our school year in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the decision-making, planning, and implementation process for school systems is the responsibility of local boards of education based upon recommendations of superintendents. The decisions of the Pelham City Schools' Board of Education and the superintendent will be based on guidance from the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), the ALSDE, and other appropriate sources. Future decisions about school day operations and instruction delivery may also be impacted by directives from the governor.

Planning for re-opening schools during the pandemic brings many issues to light, some of which are difficult to find consensus. Our plan is a guiding document that will continue to evolve and change as needed. We are committed to listening and being flexible. We will "press on" and keep moving forward as we face challenges, implement solutions, and focus on how we will continue to Inspire, Empower and Achieve in a school year that will be like no other.

**We ask that you review the information we've prepared in detail so that you can make educational decisions that are best for your family.**

## 2020-2021 CALENDAR

The first day of school has been changed from August 6 to August 19, 2020, and a [revised 2020-2021 school year calendar](#) has been developed.

Please note: our first two days of school will be based on a 50% capacity schedule for students choosing the traditional learning option.

- If student's last name begins with the letter A - L, the first day of school will be Wednesday, August 19.
- If student's last name begins with M-Z, the first day of school will be Thursday, August 20.
- If a household has students who have different last names and different start dates, those students may attend on Wednesday, August 19.
- All traditional students will attend on Friday, August 21 and thereafter according to the revised school year calendar.

# LEARNING OPTIONS & TECHNOLOGY



We understand that families must make educational decisions that are best for their student(s) and family situation so we will provide three learning options to choose from for the 2020-2021 school year.

## **Traditional**

Students attend school in-person, and instruction is conducted as it has been in the past with additional safety and wellness protocols in place.

*TECHNOLOGY: A Chromebook will be provided for all students in grades 9-12. Students in grades K - 8 will be provided a Chromebook at school, but will not be allowed to take those home.*

## **Remote**

Students experience a similar academic pathway as traditional school, but in a flexible, fully online environment.

*TECHNOLOGY: Parents who choose remote learning will provide the technology for their student(s) at home. For those who want to pursue remote learning and need a device, students can check out a device with a non-refundable device fee of \$50.*

## **Blended**

Students are remote learners, but they may still come to school for specialized classes or learning opportunities that are not available in the full remote learning option. This is mostly applicable to Pelham High School students, but there are also options for middle school and elementary school students. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Pelham City Schools will not provide transportation for blended learning.

*TECHNOLOGY: Parents who choose blended learning will provide the technology for their student(s) at home. For those who want to pursue blended learning and need a device, student(s) can check out a device with a non-refundable device fee of \$50.*

**Details and additional resources related to these learning options are provided in the Teaching and Learning section of this document.**

# WELLNESS & SCHOOL OPERATIONS



The health and safety of our students and employees have been at the forefront of our planning efforts for the return to school. In efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, Pelham City Schools will implement school operations plans and wellness protocols based on current health guidance. We expect that health information and guidance will continuously evolve so our plans may be modified as needed.

## **Physical Distancing**

While many steps will be taken to provide physical distancing, there is no way to guarantee it in all instances. The goal will be to create as much physical distancing as practical based on the number of students, available spaces, available personnel, and available resources. Spacing inside the classroom will be impacted by the number of students who choose traditional vs. remote learning.

- Classroom setup will be modified to the extent possible in order to create physical distancing among students and staff. Where feasible, rooms will be arranged with student desks facing the same direction.
- Alternate indoor spaces and outdoor areas will be used to the extent possible in order to enhance physical distancing.
- In addition to the classroom, new procedures will be developed for other areas such as the cafeteria, PE classes, etc.
- Large group gatherings will be minimized.



## Face Coverings

Face coverings will be an essential part of our wellness protocols. Wearing face coverings is a routine that we must get accustomed to in our efforts to reduce the spread of the virus to others. We ask that families supply face coverings for students who chose the traditional learning option. Specifically, face coverings -

- Will be required for students and employees\* on school buses.
- Will be required for students and employees in school buildings and in classrooms, except in special circumstances.
- Will be required when moving around the classroom and when transitioning in the hallways and in common areas of the school. Our requirement is “If you move, you mask.”
- Circumstances may allow face coverings inside the classroom to be removed in certain situations, but those situations must be determined on a case by case basis depending on available spacing, student needs, class activities, class size, etc.
- There will be circumstances outside the classroom that may not require face coverings (while eating, certain PE or outdoor activities, etc.).
- There will be exceptions for students/staff who have medical issues that make wearing a face covering inadvisable. Special circumstances will be considered for any appropriate students.
- We understand the challenges of this request, particularly for younger children, so please start the conversation with your student(s) to help them prepare for this expectation.
- All face coverings must be worn appropriately and meet school dress code requirements.

\*When safe school bus operation/visibility is not an issue.

## **Facility Cleaning**

Pelham City Schools has high standards for cleanliness and remains committed to investing in the resources to keep our schools as clean and sanitized as possible. Keeping our schools as clean as possible is a shared responsibility. Expectations related to cleaning, disinfecting, and monitoring will receive heightened awareness. Enhanced protocols include -

- Increased frequency of daytime cleaning of high touch surfaces, including handrails, door handles, light switches, desktops, shared technology, etc.
- Frequent restroom checks to ensure hand washing supplies are stocked and surfaces cleaned.
- Regular maintenance of ventilation and air handling systems.
- Employees will participate in training about enhanced cleaning protocols and maintaining a healthy and safe school environment.
- Deep cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be implemented in any classroom or specified areas where a positive case of COVID-19 has been identified.

## **Prevention Practices**

Students and employees will be educated on and reminded of proper prevention techniques.

- We will provide supplies for increased hand hygiene opportunities. Students in 2nd grade and older are encouraged to keep their own hand sanitizer with them for use throughout the day.
- Signage will be posted throughout the schools to promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs.
- Classroom practices will be modified to minimize sharing of student supplies and other items that are difficult to disinfect.

## **Water Fountains & Water Bottles**

In order to reduce the use of public water fountains, water bottles will be an essential part of our wellness protocols. We ask that families supply a water bottle for students who chose the traditional learning option. The bottle should be labeled and filled with water and brought to school each day and then taken home for cleaning on a daily basis. Water bottle filling stations will be available for students and employees to refill water supply throughout the day.



## **Visitors**

Visitors, including parents and volunteers, will be limited to essential business only. Lunch visitors will not be permitted at this time. Volunteers and chaperones will be considered on a case by case basis and should expect to adhere to all guidelines and health and safety protocols.

## **Daily Self-Screening**

We ask that parents, students, and employees partner with us to help promote a healthy school environment and reduce the risk of virus transmission. We will not be facilitating mass temperature checks or COVID-19 screenings for students and employees to enter the building.

Please self-screen each morning before coming to school or boarding a school bus. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 or higher should not go to school. Students and employees should also screen for any other COVID-19 symptoms. Those experiencing any symptoms, should not attend school.

It is important for everyone to be familiar with the [virus symptoms and screening guidance](#) prior to the start of school.

## **Health Room & Isolation Areas**

Students or employees who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms while at school will be immediately directed to the health room where the school nurse will do an assessment in a designated isolation area.

Employees with a possible COVID-19 case will leave the school immediately. Parents of students with a possible COVID-19 case will be notified immediately and asked to pick up the student within the hour.



## **COVID-19 Exposure & Contact Tracing**

Parents and students who choose the traditional learning option are taking a greater risk of exposure than if they stay home. It is expected that the school will not do contact tracing or quarantine groups of people based upon individual positive cases of COVID-19, as those duties are the specific responsibility of the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH). However, we are expecting more guidance from ADPH related to exposure guidelines and contact tracing, so this process can't be fully described at this time. It is our intent to follow the guidelines from ADPH, the ALSDE, and other appropriate sources.

For more information about current health protocols, [click here](#).

## **Transportation**

Pelham City Schools encourages parents to provide their own transportation for those who choose the traditional learning option.

For those who are not able to self-transport, buses will be available and [several health protocols](#) will be implemented to make the buses as safe as possible. However, maintaining six-feet of physical distancing will not be feasible on school buses. Spacing on buses will be impacted by the number of students who choose traditional vs. remote learning and also by the number of families that decide to provide their own transportation.

Additionally, we want to make parents aware that driver availability (bus drivers and substitutes) could become an issue if we have drivers who are impacted by the virus. We will adjust to bus staffing issues the best we can, but it is possible that bus transportation for certain routes may not be available at some times. We would like to encourage all families who choose to use bus transportation to develop a back-up plan in the event that we have a shortage of bus drivers which would create a need for families to transport their students to school.

We realize that longer car rider lines may develop based on transportation choices, and we will adjust as needed if this occurs.

## Food Service

In addition to food safety guidelines, we will add several preventive measures to the food service aspect of the traditional school day, including -

- Cafeterias will be limited to 50% occupancy.
- Meals will be wrapped or served in closed containers.
- Self-serve options will not be available.
- Sanitation of serving lines/registers/keypads will be completed between classes.
- Dining room tables will be sanitized between classes and at the end of the meal session.

In elementary schools breakfast will be available in the classroom. Lunch will be served based on grade level. 3rd-5th grades will enter cafeteria, pick up food from serving area, and return to classrooms to eat. PreK-2nd grades will enter cafeteria, pick up food from serving area, and eat in cafeteria.

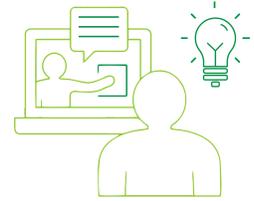
In middle and high school, only students who are buying breakfast will be allowed in the cafeteria. Students not eating breakfast will go to another assigned area in the school. For lunch, sessions will be staggered and/or alternative locations will be opened to limit cafeteria occupancy to 50%.

## MEALS FOR REMOTE LEARNERS

Curbside pickup will be available at Pelham Park Middle School two times weekly. Pick up will be available Monday and Thursday between designated times (to be determined). Meals picked up Monday will consist of three days' worth of food. Meals picked up Thursday will consist on two days' worth of food.



# TEACHING & LEARNING



**IMPORTANT:** Click the links in the description of each learning option for many details about what to expect.

## Traditional

Students attend school in-person, and instruction is conducted as it has been in the past with additional safety and wellness protocols in place. For families who choose this option, please complete a short [survey](#) by July 20, 2020 to assist in our planning efforts.

*TECHNOLOGY: A Chromebook will be provided for all students in grades 9-12. Students in grades K - 8 will be provided a Chromebook at school, but will not be allowed to take those home.*

[Details here.](#)

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## Remote

Students experience a similar academic pathway as traditional school, but in a flexible, fully online environment. Families who choose this option must complete [an application](#) by July 20, 2020.

*TECHNOLOGY: Parents who choose remote learning will provide the technology for their students at home. For those who want to pursue remote learning and require a device, students can check out a device with a non-refundable device fee of \$50.*

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## Blended

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*TECHNOLOGY: Parents who choose blended learning will provide the technology for their students at home. For those who want to pursue blended learning and require a device, students can check out a device with a non-refundable device fee of \$50.*

[Details here.](#)



## **Attendance Procedures**

School attendance remains important for consistency and academic achievement. However, given the circumstances of COVID-19 and the importance of following health protocols when students are ill, there will be changes to incorporate more flexibility in our attendance procedures this school year.

The limit of five parent notes for student illness will be waived for this school year.

In addition, attendance will not be a factor in determining eligibility for semester exam exemptions in grades 9-12. Qualifying criteria will include: student must have an “A” average for the semester for the core content class they wish to exempt, and they must have no ISS or higher discipline consequences for the semester.

## **Digital Integration for All Students**

All students regardless of learning option choice will take part in digital integration lessons to introduce and/or revisit learning management systems, technology, and online learning platforms utilized by Pelham City Schools.

## **Parent Academy for Instructional Technology**

A website is being developed with resources for the technology and digital learning platforms used by Pelham City Schools. 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.

## **Social-Emotional Learning & Mental Wellness**

All students regardless of learning option choice will receive counseling lessons on a variety of topics related to social-emotional learning, educational achievement, college and career readiness, healthy habits, and more. Additionally, all students will have access to the system's mental health liaison for support and referrals.

## **Special Populations**

Schools will work with students with individual education and/or health plans to accommodate student needs and support learning option choices. Parents should contact their student's case manager or school administrator with any questions.



## **Extended Day Program**

We are mindful that the Extended Day Program for elementary students is an important and necessary offering for many of our families. We intend to provide our Extended Day Programs, but increased requirements related to staffing, cleaning, and other operational expenses will necessitate a rate increase for registration and tuition.

Please help us plan for the upcoming school year by completing your registration as soon as possible. Space is limited. [More details here.](#)

## **Staffing**

We are intently focused on implementing enhanced health and safety protocols to help our students and employees stay well. The cooperation of all is imperative to our efforts to keep our traditional school option available for our families. If a percentage of our bus drivers are absent, it will have a dramatic impact on bus routes. If a percentage of our teachers are absent for extended periods of time, adjustments will likely have to be made in the way instruction is being delivered. If our support staff are absent in large numbers due to COVID-19, it will impact our ability to provide normal school day operations. For these reasons, we ask everyone to do their part in following all of the components of our return to school plan.

# WHAT-IF SCENARIOS

Pelham City Schools will continue to collaborate with the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama State Department of Education, and other key stakeholders and adapt to circumstances to facilitate our school year during the pandemic. We may have to modify plans and remain flexible to changing guidance and procedures, but we don't expect a complete educational shut down as we experienced earlier this year. In order to avoid a complete shutdown, other learning scenarios may be considered, depending on circumstances.

**CURRENT PLAN:** Utilize a multi-option approach to provide traditional learning, remote learning, and blended learning based on each family's selection. This approach provides the most flexibility to families and this is the planned scenario for 2020-2021.

**CONTINGENCY PLAN A:** Utilize a 50% approach to reduce capacity. If issues arise that make us unable to effectively operate our traditional learning option, reducing the number of days that students attend may become an option. This would entail having students attend school only two days per week, therefore reducing school populations by half, and allowing schools to increase physical distancing. As an example, students in one group may be assigned to attend on Monday and Tuesday. The other group of students may attend on Thursday and Friday. Wednesday may be utilized for enhanced cleaning and virtual teacher meetings. Students would participate in remote learning from home when they are not on school campuses.

The first two days of our school year will utilize the 50% approach. This will provide us with an opportunity to teach students new procedures related to COVID-19 in smaller groups, allow us to practice the 50% approach, and identify opportunities for improvement should we need to consider this plan at a later date.

**CONTINGENCY PLAN B:** Transition to remote learning option for all students. If drastic measures are needed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, a full remote option where all students learn from home may be implemented.



# NEXT STEPS FOR PARENTS

After you've had the opportunity to review all of the details outlined in this plan and consider the learning options we are providing for the 2020-2021 school year, we ask that families make the educational decisions that are best for your student(s).

If you are selecting the Remote or Blended learning option for your student, you are required to complete an application by Monday, July 20, 2020. [Click here to begin.](#) [For application in Spanish, click here.](#)

Please remember there is a one-semester commitment when you choose Remote or Blended learning. Students who choose this option will have the opportunity to return to the Traditional learning option in January 2021.

There is no need to complete the application if you are choosing the Traditional learning option. However, if you choose this learning option, please complete a [short survey](#) by July 20, 2020 to assist in our planning efforts. [For survey in Spanish, click here.](#)

Families who do not complete the application for Remote or Blended learning will be automatically opted-in to the Traditional learning option.

# QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

Please direct any questions and/or feedback about our reopening plans and learning options to [communications@pelhamcityschools.org](mailto:communications@pelhamcityschools.org).

# STAY CONNECTED

We will continue to provide timely updates and current information via parent emails, and posts on our district website and social media accounts. We encourage you to stay connected and monitor all district and school communications closely.

**We appreciate your support, patience, and flexibility as we implement plans for our path forward. The collective effort of students, employees, and parents to maintain a safe and healthy environment will be key as we work together to face the challenges of COVID-19 and provide our students with outstanding learning opportunities - no matter the circumstances.**