

## 09-22-2020 PARENT LETTER

To Our Lexington District One Staff and Parents/Guardians:

Tonight, at a meeting of the Lexington County School District One Board of Trustees, Superintendent Dr. Greg Little presented the district's Phase Two academic plan.

Although we originally hoped to have all students back in school on Monday, September 28, we have realized after the last three weeks of instruction that bringing everyone back at the same time is not the best approach.

We built our original timeline around the fact that four weeks would give us two complete COVID-19 infection cycles and to allow us to practice our new safety routines. We learned that we needed to do whatever we could to alleviate the impact of social distancing first. For that reason, we built Phase Two around adding Plexiglass in all schools and creating other ways for students to social distance.

Both parents and staff recommended phasing in our face-to-face classrooms, and we agree. We have learned that we must take deliberate steps and do safety checks along the way. Our goal is not just to open but to stay open.

As we bring back more and more students, we are committed to minimizing student and staff exposure as much as possible. We will continue to study the number of positive COVID-19 cases throughout the district, the number of individuals who have exhibited symptoms, student and staff attendance data, and the district's ability to cover classes when substitutes are not available.

In Phase Two, our "Four Plus One" model, the district brings Cohort A and B pre-kindergarten through second-grade students into school for face-to-face instruction four days a week (Monday–Thursday) beginning Monday, Oct. 5. Fridays will remain e-learning days.

Although these PreK–G2 students have already been wearing masks as they move around the schools, in this model those students will also wear masks in class.

In addition, some students with Individualized Education Plans and some English Language Learners will also come back on Oct. 5. Right now, students in grades three through 12 with IEPs served in Resource programs will stay on their hybrid schedule.

This model gives schools time to adjust to serving more students in the building and allows them to bring in the youngest students who most need face-to-face instruction while monitoring the spread of COVID-19 carefully. Elementary students, who have some of the highest educational and social-emotional needs, do not change classes, stay with their classroom family throughout the day, and rarely travel the halls as meals are delivered to their rooms.

On top of all the other safety strategies, PreK–G2 students will also have Plexiglass dividers at their desks. Grades 3–5 will also receive Plexiglass dividers in the following weeks. As soon as they are installed, we will go ahead and bring them in, too.

The plan does not impact students in the Online Learning Academy.

Lessons learned during the first three weeks of school, surveys, and meetings with the Superintendent's Advisory Councils show us that the district can hold face-to-face learning with the proper safety measures for students and staff. However, we have also learned that until we can adequately reduce the need for social distancing for middle and high school students, we think it best for them to stay in the current hybrid (AA BB) model for the time being.

Middle and high school students change classes many times during the day. They also have other opportunities to gather outside of the classroom as they participate in athletics, performing arts, and other activities. When social distancing has not been possible for secondary students, it has significantly affected the number of students who have had to quarantine. We will begin to bring secondary students back when we can do more to provide social distancing.

### **What's next?**

If the PreK–G2 Phase Two model goes well, Cohort A and B students in grades three through five will be the next to transition to this model in Phase Three, which occurs Oct. 19. Middle and high schools will also begin to phase in students with the highest needs in Phase Three.

In the meantime, all other middle and high school students will continue with their current AA and BB hybrid model, with each cohort coming to school for face-to-face learning two days a week and e-learning from home three days a week. Some middle and high school students may begin to transition sooner than their classmates as the district focuses on priority groups of students.

Thank you for your support as we continue to bring students in — while maintaining social distancing as much as possible. We need your help, too. Please remind your students that they pledged at the beginning of school to:

- wear a mask while on a school bus and campus, as described above.
- practice social-distancing measures in classrooms and common areas.
- follow school officials' directions regarding health and safety.
- practice good hygiene (wash/sanitize hands often, cover coughs/sneezes with inside of elbow or tissue, etc.).
- let their teacher or another staff member know if they don't feel well or think they may have any of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

We are Stronger Together.

Dr. Greg Little, Superintendent