

Jesup CSD Return to Learn Progress Update

I hope everyone is having a wonderful summer so far! While our spring was about the farthest thing from normal, it was nice to start to see some familiar activities start to take place again as June began. High school baseball and softball, youth rec ball, and our summer child care program have all begun to breathe life back into our buildings. As we begin the month of July, more and more students are returning to our buildings as we open up summer weightlifting, sport camps, open gyms, and more and more activities. Before we know it, the school year will begin!

With that being said, the State has required school districts to submit a Return to Learn Plan to them by July 1st. The application process for this was very basic and did not require specific details on how this learning will actually happen. With the input of staff, principals, and families in collaboration with area school districts and Public Health, we have been gathering information to help us develop plans for returning this fall. We have submitted our application to the State and it has been approved. However the “real work” continues as we assemble the specific details on what this will look like starting on August 24th. As with everything that has transpired since March 16th when schools initially closed down, plans will need to remain fluid and, as a district, we will need to be able to pivot quickly as information we receive changes and is updated.

The Jesup administrative team has been working diligently to assemble this detailed plan. We continue to work with Public Health and are consulting with staff including our school nurse, maintenance director, transportation director, and our teacher leaders. It is our expectation to release our district plan publicly by August 1st. In the meantime, I would like to share a brief summary of where we currently are at in our planning. It is our intent at this time, to return to school in person starting August 24th. We are also developing alternative plans in the event that some staff and students are not able to return due to medical issues or that some families are just not quite comfortable yet returning in person. Lastly, we will have a contingency plan in place in the event that schools are required to shutdown again similar to this past spring where we would shift to a required remote learning setup for all students.

For on-site learning this fall, we are currently focusing our work on reducing the mixing of students throughout the day as much as possible. The most recent guidance that we have received is limiting the opportunities for individuals to be within 6 feet of each other for more than 15 minutes and when you are not able to do so, then face masks are recommended. We do not plan on requiring face masks, but rather recommending their use when in close contact with others for extended periods of time. We will be providing face shields for any staff member who wishes to wear one. The principals are working to develop schedules that limit the mixing of students from class period to class period. This will be more challenging at the high school level as student schedules vary greatly. One idea that we are reviewing is placing student desks/tables in pods within the classroom that are spaced 6 feet apart and assigning seats. This would reduce the mixing of students and allow us to trace exposure more easily in the event of

a positive case. These are just a few of the specifics that we are considering at this time and a more detailed final plan will be shared by the end of this month. This detailed plan will include procedures for both classroom time as well as bussing, cafeteria, passing time, extra-curricular activities, and so on.

In the event that a staff member or student is unable to attend on-site learning, the district is committed to offering a hybrid system of remote learning for those not in attendance. From our survey administered this past month, the overwhelming majority responded that they would prefer to be on-site this fall. As we approach the start of the school year, we will be reaching out to families and staff to see what the final numbers are at that time. For a student who is not in attendance, we plan to offer synchronous remote access to classroom instruction through Zoom or Google Classroom when possible. We will work with the student and families to ensure that the instruction is provided and work is completed in their absence. For staff members who are medically unable to return to on-site work, we will be developing a plan for each job category to provide remote work if possible, including the work of teachers. These are details that we are continuing to develop with our principals, teacher leaders, and department supervisors. Some positions will be more conducive to working remotely than others.

The last component of our planning is for 100% remote learning. This plan will only be put into place in the event that schools are required to close. This plan will look somewhat similar to the continuous learning that took place this spring but a bit more stringent in our requirements and procedures. The district will move to a 1:1 computing environment this fall for students in grades 5th through 12th with each student being issued a Chromebook. The district will continue to utilize digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Seesaw, and potentially others as appropriate. One significant difference in a remote learning environment moving forward as compared to this spring, is that attendance would be required and work would be assessed and graded. The building principals and teacher leaders are working to develop plans and procedures on how this would be implemented at the different buildings and grade levels. It is our hope that this option would not need to be put into action and if so it would only be for a short period of time. The guidance we have received from the State so far on when this type of plan would need to be implemented is that each school district would work with their county's Public Health Department to make this determination.

Each day we get closer to the start of the school year, the picture of how school will look will continue to become clearer. We continue to work hard as a school district and in concert with area schools, Central Rivers AEA, the State Department of Education, and Buchanan County Public Health to put into place the best and safest plans possible. We appreciate your patience with us through this process and welcome your input as we continue to refine our plans. Thank you for your help and commitment to the Jesup School District. Your support as a parent, student, teacher, support staff, or community member will go a long way in our district being successful as we return this fall.

Thanks and take care,

Nathan Marting
Superintendent