

PALESTINE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

"Palestine ISD... A World-Class Academic Organization"

Jason Marshall
Superintendent

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Friday, July 24, 2020 (5 pm)

PISD Students, Staff, and Parents,

Great news! We get to come back to school in person, and we get to do it soon. The Palestine ISD Board of Trustees approved our **Return to School Plan** last night, and I am as excited to share it with you as we are to see our students.

In developing our plan, we did not want to make these decisions in complete isolation. We have relied heavily on guidance from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Further, we have asked you to provide us input via a survey earlier in the summer, and while the majority told us that you have some reservations about returning to school – you told us that you are ready to do so. We have also taken input from our medical community, emergency management agencies, and our city and county elected officials. And while our Covid-19 cases are still a major concern in Anderson County as our hospital Covid-19 unit is full of patients, with the precautions that we are putting in place and the plan we have developed, we have been granted approval by our local county health official to return to school.

Our complete **Return to School Plan** is on page 3 of this letter, but please see the following list of information items and requirements prior to reading the plan:

1. Under Governor Abbott's order, Face Masks must be worn by all staff members and any student 10 years of age and older. For PISD, this will include all 5th grade and older students. In purchasing your student's mask, please make sure to purchase a 1 color, solid mask – no graphics/writing/etc. You may put your student's name/initials in the bottom left hand corner of the mask if you choose (max size 1"x1"). If the governor lifts the mask order, your student may continue (voluntarily) to wear the mask. Parents visiting a campus must also wear a mask.
2. There is no longer a cap on the number of students who may ride a school bus at one time. In other words, we can fill a bus completely with students. However, **ALL students (regardless of age) must wear a mask on the school bus.** If the bus reaches a certain number of riders at a given time, then we are required to open the windows on the bus. That will take place on a case by case basis.
3. **PISD will provide breakfast and lunch to ALL STUDENTS in 2020-21 free of charge regardless of family income level.** PISD will also provide breakfast and lunch to students on Home Learning Days – students and parents will need to notify their campus principal of that need. Finally, any student who chooses the 100% Home Learning Plan is eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch – again, make sure you communicate that need to your campus principal.
4. PISD has posted on our website as of this afternoon our School Supply List for preK-6th graders. We have also sent that list to various stores in town so that you may pick one up as you enter the store. PISD is continuing to assist parents with those school supplies related to safety and cleanliness as we did last year. Additionally, we are purchasing pencils, paper, etc this year to help parents with those costs. You can see those items on the overall Composite List.
5. On days that your child is in school, we will have our normal after-school program (TACE). TACE will begin Tuesday, September 8th.

6. Students and parents may choose the 100% Home Learning Plan. In no way is my next comment meant to discourage you from choosing that plan - each family must make their own decision, and we support that. Please know, however, that this year's plan will be considerably more difficult (academically and procedurally) than last spring's plan. Under TEA guidelines, this year's plan must be completely aligned with state academic standards including STAAR test prep, must include numerical grades, and students must check-in for attendance and spend a minimum of 4 hours/day engaged in lessons. Students are also required to submit work to teachers each and every day – not just one day per week. If you are interested in the Home Learning Plan, please indicate that on your student's survey.
7. Just as students and parents may choose the Home Learning Plan, PISD may place students on the Home Learning Plan for failure to comply with Covid-19 requirements. For example, if a student who is required to wear a face mask consistently refuses to do so, then PISD may place that student on the Home Learning Plan in order to protect other students.
8. PISD will publish a list of the recommended Student and Staff Daily Covid-19 Self Monitoring Requirements on our website next week. We ask all students and staff to do that on a daily basis. Additionally, we will have Covid-19 Checking stations (including daily temperature checks) in multiple locations at each campus.
9. Finally, as you review our **Return to School Plan**, please keep the following in mind:
 - a. We want students in school! We want to see their face; we want to visit with them; we want to check on them; and, we want to teach them.
 - b. We want a plan that provides a comfortable adjustment back into the school environment for students, parents, and staff.
 - c. We have an enormous task in trying to implement the Covid-19 safety measures that we have never had before. We need time to “get good” at that before having 100% capacity in the buildings. Quite frankly, we are going to make some mistakes at the beginning of the year. We always do, and this year will be even more difficult. With reduced capacities in our buildings at the beginning, we hope to spot those mistakes quickly so that we can fix them. Safety is too important of an issue to not correct.
 - d. We want to be a partner with our community (especially our medical community) in doing our part to avoid a major Covid-19 spike at the beginning of the school year.
 - e. We must have opportunities to practice a variety of potential Covid-19 shutdown scenarios (i.e. October, December, February). Our 4-week **Return to School Plan** allows us to practice both isolated and full-scale Covid-19 shutdown situations.

In closing, I want to thank you for your patience over the last several months. I know it has been difficult. The simple fact that we haven't known from day to day what we are going to be doing next week definitely takes its toll on us. We hope that by getting back to school immediately but by doing it on a slower, cautionary pace will help you, your student, and your family. And, please, if there is anything we can do for you or if you have any concerns let you principal know.

Sincerely,

Jason Marshall
Superintendent
Palestine ISD

Palestine ISD
Return to School Plan
August 2020

Monday, 8/3 – Friday, 8/7: All Staff Return and Voluntary Student iPad/Laptop pick-up

Staff will participate in Professional Development (including Covid-19 training) and Workdays. Students will receive a schedule for when to pick-up their iPad or Laptop.

Monday, 8/10 – Friday 8/14 = First Week of School

Monday – Thursday

1. 25% Student Capacity each day for 4 days that week – approximately 5 students per classroom each day. Campus Principals will notify parents by 8/3 which day (1) their student is to attend school – the district will work to ensure students from the same household will attend school on the same day. Students will learn at home (attendance required) on days not at school and after receiving iPad or laptop.
 2. PreK – 4th Grade required (1) Parent classroom visit with child on the day your child is scheduled to attend school for Meet the Teacher, Covid-19 Conversations, iPad delivery and Online Learning Platform Orientation, etc. Parent classroom visit will take 60-90 minutes maximum. 5th grade – 12th grade parent may attend but not required. Parents who have multiple students may attend the orientation at their other student's campus as needed.
 3. Parent leaves after visit, and student remains until dismissed at 2 pm.
 4. Principals and campus staff reflect/debrief/troubleshoot from 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm each day.
- Friday – All students participate in a Home Learning Day (online attendance required); Practice a potential full campus/district future Covid closure; Staff using Technology ½ at school – ½ at home.

Monday, 8/17 – Friday 8/21 = Second Week of School

Monday – Thursday = Same as previous week, except no required parent visit. Parent may bring student to school on their assigned day if they choose but not required. Additionally, student dismissal will be at normal time (see campus bell schedule times).

Friday – Same as previous week.

Monday, 8/24 – Friday 8/28 = Third Week of School

Monday – Thursday

1. 50% Student Capacity each day for 4 days - approximately 10 students per classroom each day. Campus Principals will notify parents by 8/17 which days (2) their student is to attend school – the district will work to ensure students from the same household will attend school on the same day. Regular dismissal time.
 2. Students will attend school on an A/B schedule. A = Mon/Wed, and B = Tues/Thurs. Students will learn at home on their off days (online attendance required).
 3. Parents of PreK – 4th students may take their child to the classroom on the first day of the week, but that will be the last time.
- Friday – all students participate in a Home Learning Day (online attendance required); Practice a potential full campus/district future Covid closure; Staff using Technology ½ at school – ½ at home.

Monday, 8/31 – Friday 9/4 = Fourth Week of School

Same as previous week.

Monday, 9/7 – Friday, 9/11 = 5th Week of School

Monday – Labor Day Holiday

Tuesday – Friday = 100% Full Capacity with No Home Learning unless Covid-19 requires an extension of a reduced capacity plan (board approved, Governor/TEA ordered, Local Health Authority mandated).

Extracurricular Plan

Football and Volleyball may begin Monday, 8/3, in accordance with UIL rules. Band may begin immediately practicing individual music pieces but may not begin Marching until Tuesday, 9/8, in accordance with UIL rules. Cross Country, Team Tennis, and Fall Golf won't begin until school starts (8/10). Cheerleading and Drill Team won't begin until school starts (8/10).

Note: Our athletic district executive committee is meeting next week to decide the specifics of football season (safety measures at games for players and spectators, crowd limits, support group travel, etc.)