

Students, Staff, Parents and Patrons: (Updated July 21st)

As our thoughts turn to the start of school rapidly approaching, all of us are busy trying to plan for daycare, school activities and juggle our work schedules. Given the challenging times we all find ourselves in there are a lot of questions all of us have concerning the upcoming school year and how the pandemic may impact school and our lives.

While we cannot answer all the questions at this time, I'm glad to share what we know and think at this time. One thing we do know for certain is we are planning for multiple contingencies and some of those plans will change on us and likely without much notice. We have been busy working with both KSDE and SNCO Health on the baseline of requirements we will need to meet for this school year, both in terms of academics as well as operating schools as safely as possible.

It is probably easiest to share some "frequently asked questions" since many of us have the same ones at this time. Here are some of the questions we are getting and what we think at this time:

Will we have school this year starting in August or will it be delayed?

I wish I could give you a definitive date we will start on but we really don't know at this time. The Governor's Executive Order (Issued July 20th) delays the reopening of schools until after Labor Day but, the order is subject to approval by the State Board of Education. Until we get some clarification by both the Governor and the State Board we do not know for sure if we will open September 9th or some earlier date?

Because of the extensive list of supplies, training/Professional Development and changes we need to make to begin this year as safe as possible, I see little chance of us starting school on August 12th as originally scheduled. If the EO is approved by the State Board, students will begin school September 9th. If the State Board rejects the EO and districts are left in limbo, we will likely push back the start of school for students to later in August and front-load PD dates to the start of the year to help with staff training. My best estimate of a new start date for students is Wednesday, August 26th. . . . clearly this date is fluid at this point and will need to be approved by the USD 372 Board of Education if we are not under an Executive Order to begin September 9th.

What will school look like? Will it be in person, Online or a Hybrid of those two?

Our goal from the start of planning for reopening this year has been to open school in a traditional On-Campus in person attendance model where students will see their teacher each day if possible. We know this is by far the most effective instructional model for students and we are hopeful we will be able to meet the social distancing requirements to make that model possible. We realize that could change over the next month based on the number of Covid-19

cases locally, the amount of social distancing we can create as well as executive or county health department orders we are obligated to follow.

While we wait for direction from the state to determine a start date, everyone should expect changes to some of our routines to reduce contact between people, especially in large group settings. Staff, students and parents should expect modifications to our morning arrival routines, lunch room routines, class transition routines when large numbers of students are moving as well as transportation and bus restrictions to name a few.

Because of the likelihood of localized outbreaks especially when we reach the colder months, we will likely need to utilize three instructional models this year, On Campus Traditional Instruction, Online/Remote learning and a Hybrid of those two. Again, our goal is to spend our time in the On-Campus Learning model.

ON-CAMPUS LEARNING:	HYBRID LEARNING	REMOTE LEARNING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low community restrictions for COVID-19. • Schools can operate at 100% capacity with precautions. • Social distancing can be practiced where feasible. • Group sizes and spectator events will meet local guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate community restrictions for COVID-19. • Schools will operate at 50% capacity with students alternating between on-site and remote. • Social distancing will be enforced. • Group sizes will meet local guidelines. • Spectator events may not be allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used when community restrictions are high. • School capacity restricted to essential staff and activities. • Social distancing is strictly enforced. • Group sizes will meet local guidelines (10). • Spectator events not allowed.

What will the Plan for reopening look like?

Our plan will make use of a simple color code system which will have escalating mitigation factors that correspond to Covid-19 threat levels. Green, Yellow, Orange, Red:

GREEN: Low threat. A very low number of cases requiring hospitalizations or death in Shawnee and surrounding counties. No restrictions in place from state or county. This may be commonly described as “the new normal.” Social distancing and good hygiene will be a daily practice.

YELLOW: Moderate threat. Case numbers are rising in the county or community and the state or county has imposed some restrictions on group sizes. School is able to continue, but gathering sizes are limited in some manner and/or social distancing requirements are in place.

ORANGE: High Threat. A large number of, or rapidly escalating numbers of cases in the district or surrounding counties/communities. State or county has imposed restrictions such that building occupancy or class sizes must be reduced.

RED: Very High Threat. Active case diagnosed with possible exposure to contagion within the school. State or county has imposed restrictions that prohibit face-to-face contact with students.

Mitigation efforts will apply to various activities and parts of the school day in an effort to create a safer learning environment and work place.

Will the online/virtual Instruction be similar to the fourth quarter of last year?

For such a huge pivot and short timeframe to put it together, the online/virtual experience went remarkably well. Students, families and teachers made the best of a tough situation and we completed the fourth quarter online. We learned a lot going through that process and have a lot of survey data from students and staff about what worked, what didn't and why.

While we were happy with the effort, flexibility and grace shown by everyone, that same model, effort and performance won't be good enough this time around. The performance bar is going up for all of us, it has too! Our goal for students is growth and the passive nature of the online work we did in the spring wasn't rigorous enough to help students grow academically.

Students and families told us they struggled with the loss of the structure and routine school attendance provides, there were too many platforms utilized across the grade levels, the rigor and value of the work we assigned needs to increase, students must engage at a higher level, students must apply their knowledge and skills at a deeper level and students must produce a product to earn their grades and show mastery of the standards they are learning.

Will People have to wear masks this year?

Yes, masks will be required at various times and in varying situations this school year. As all of you are aware SNCO is currently under a mask mandate that applies to schools. That mandate requires people age 10 and older to wear masks and we are obligated to follow that order. Additionally, one of the Governor's Executive Order also mandates masks in school even in the grade school down to age 5. There may be additional requirements for masks in order for us to operate with all students on campus and meet social distancing requirements as we work through this year. An example of this could be the requirement of anyone riding a bus will be required to wear a mask, even if they are an elementary student. As those requirements are determined by local and state officials, we will add those details into our plan.

We have ordered 2-ply cloth masks for all our students (1 each) but parents should be prepared to send your child to school with a clean cloth mask each day.

When there is a student or staff member who tests positive, will you share that information?

We do not have access to staff or student test results or related medical information. We currently are not contacted nor informed by contact tracers or SNCO Health when someone in our school tests positive so we cannot confirm any information related to a positive test.

We currently rely on the collective sense of responsibility we all feel and concern for others by staff, students and families who inform us and others when they test positive. What we can and will do is notify you when we are notified by a family of a positive test and what classes or activities may be impacted by that.

Contact tracing and testing are two critical areas to reopening our society safely. Unfortunately, those two critical areas are outside our control and those resources are already stressed and limited with the Covid-19 resurgence. We are working with SNCO Health and Emergency Management weekly to address those issues and hope those two areas will improve as we proceed through the fall.

Will we have activities this year?

I hope so and we are planning on having all activities at this time. We understand the importance co-curricular activities and experiences play for our students and for our school climate and culture. We are also all keenly aware of the trouble professional sports teams and major colleges are having holding their seasons and they have unlimited resources at their disposal.

We do not know what KSHSAA contingency plans for this year's activities and seasons are at this time. Given the prevalence of the Covid-19 spread and the risks associated with prolonged physical contact, we assume there will be some modifications to either our seasons, number of games or activities themselves but have no idea what those may be at this time.

I'm concerned about sending my children to school. Will Online/virtual school be an option for them since you have to prepare for that possibility anyway?

We understand the concern some families will have with the return to school this fall. Since we are having to plan for both in-person/on-campus instruction and Online Instruction we anticipate allowing an online option for students and families who choose that. That option will only be available to current Silver Lake students and you must commit to that that option for a nine week period.

We will update these questions as well as add others as more information becomes available. I anticipate completing our Back To School plan and releasing that around August 1st. Thanks for your flexibility and support as we work to reopen school and provide your child with the best education and experience we can in as safe an environment as possible.

Tim Hallacy
Superintendent