

# T/E School District

## Reopening Schools: 2020-2021

### FAQs



*Last Updated: September 18, 2020*

*Please note that these questions and answers are based on the proposed 2020-2021 Reopening Plans. We will make any necessary adjustments to this document if the plans change prior to Board approval.*

### Reopening Plans

**1. What options do TESD families have for attending school in the 2020-2021 school year? Updated 9/3/20**

Students in grades 1-12 will start the school year on August 31 with virtual instruction. Kindergarten students will start school virtually on September 8, with virtual screenings occurring the week of August 31. Virtual instruction will last until at least October 12, 2020.

Families will have the choice of transitioning to a combination of in-person instruction and virtual instruction when school resumes, no earlier than September 21 or remaining with 100% virtual instruction. The District will distribute an electronic form to all families asking them to select Option 1 or Option 2 by August 12.

**Option 1:** Combination of live, in-person instruction in school buildings and live, broadcasted classroom instruction to the student's home

**Option 2:** Live, broadcasted classroom instruction to the student's home with some asynchronous instructional activities

The transition to in-person instruction in school buildings will be conducted in phases by introducing small groups of students into schools on a rotating basis. This transition period is currently planned to last one week. The actual start date of in-person instruction will be based on current pandemic conditions and State guidance.

**2. Why is TESD starting the school year with 100% virtual learning? Updated 9/3/20**

TESD is starting the year with all students learning virtually for educational and safety reasons. This time period will also allow students and teachers to prepare for the transition to live, synchronous instruction. Starting school virtually will allow time between potential summer travel and the start of in-person instruction, reducing the risk of possible virus transmission.

On Friday, August 14, the [Chester County Health Department \(CCHD\) recommended that schools in Chester and Delaware County remain virtual through at least October 9](#). Based on this recommendation, the TESD School Board approved extending virtual instruction until at least October 12.

**3. Why is in-person instruction being offered less than five days a week?**

The District is following state and local guidance for reopening schools which includes social distancing of at least six feet. In order to adhere to this guidance, schools will need to operate at a reduced capacity when students are in the building. As a result, our plan includes a combination of live, in-person in school buildings and live, virtual classroom instruction. In-school capacity and in-school rotation will be determined based on current color phase, guidance on social distancing, gathering size limitations, and number of families that opt to participate in in-person instruction.

**4. Will there be any options for working parents who need a five-day solution?**

The District is working with local childcare providers and community organizations in an effort to address anticipated childcare needs associated with the reopening plans. Additional information will be shared with families as it becomes available.

**5. If I choose in-person instruction for my child, will all of the children in my family go to their respective schools on the same days?**

Yes. The days students attend school will be determined alphabetically by last name in all grades. Students may be grouped together if siblings have a different last name.

**6. By what date do families need to select in-person instruction or virtual instruction? Are families allowed to change their selection during the school year?**

Families were asked to inform the District of their choice by August 12. Changes to this decision will be honored through September 18. Changes made between August 12 and September 18 may result in a change to your child's schedule or teacher.

After September 18, we ask that the decision be maintained through Thanksgiving Recess (November 24). Consideration for changes will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis for pandemic-related reasons.

**7. Did teachers, school nurses and parents have input on the reopening plan?**

Yes. Teacher representatives and school nurses have been collaborating with District administrators on the plan's development since June. In addition, District staff met with representatives from TESD parent groups and held meetings with teachers at all levels to discuss reopening, receive input and answer questions. In June, a distance learning survey was completed by parents, teachers and secondary students. In addition, over 400 emails with feedback, comments and suggestions have been received in the District's distance learning inboxes over the summer. The reopening plan was posted on the District website for public review on Friday, July 24, with opportunities for feedback to be shared at the District Meeting to Present the Reopening Plan on Monday, July 27, and also at the Special School Board Meeting on Wednesday, July 29.

**8. How is TESD supporting students' mental and emotional health during the 2020-2021 school year?**

All students will have opportunities to participate in live sessions focusing on community-building, social-emotional well-being, resiliency, connectedness, developmental guidance, bullying prevention, and digital citizenship. In addition, school counselors and mental health specialists will meet with students on an individual or group basis to support students' emotional and mental health needs in Red, Yellow or Green phases, regardless of virtual or in-person attendance. If you have any concerns about your child's mental or emotional health, please contact your school principal or school counselor.

**9. How will special education services be delivered during virtual instruction?**

Students with IEPs and GIEPs will receive instruction regardless of virtual or in-person status, including the provision of direct instruction in identified areas, related services such as speech, and check-ins with teachers and paraeducators. We will continue to conduct multi-disciplinary evaluations to determine eligibility for services.

**10. How will support services be delivered during virtual instruction?**

Support services such as English Language Development, Reading Support, Multi-Tiered Intervention (MIT) and mental health services will be provided during all phases of instruction.

**11. Will sports, extra-curricular activities, performances, field trips or activities outside of the school day be held this fall? Updated 9/14/20**

On Friday, August 28, the Central League announced they would not proceed with the fall season at this time. At this point, the Central League is advocating the PIAA approves an alternative schedule that will begin later in the year. T/E continues to work with the Central League, District One and the PIAA, in consultation with health authorities, to examine all possible options for fall sports. These organizations are looking at a range of alternatives to provide an opportunity for students to participate in fall sports. When the District learns about all options it will work collaboratively with league partners to pursue a solution.

Extra-curricular clubs that can be run virtually or in accordance with health and safety guidelines will have the option of continuing.

The District is monitoring emerging research and guidance from professional organizations regarding performing ensembles. Face-to-face and virtual solutions are being considered to provide students continued opportunities in the performing arts.

District-sponsored student field trips, in-person staff conferences and facility rentals will not occur this year.

**12. Are parents and other visitors allowed in the schools?**

In accordance with guidance from the CCHD and the AAP, only visitors providing essential duties (e.g. contractors, delivery staff, etc.) should enter the buildings.

Essential parent visits to schools are by appointment only and are limited at this time. All visitors must follow CDC and CCHD symptom screening guidelines.

We plan to hold parent meetings, including IEP, GIEP, and 504 meetings, virtually using audio and video.

## Health and Safety Protocols

**1. Does the Order of the Secretary of the PA Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings apply to children and adults while in schools?**

Yes, this order applies to all students, staff and visitors age two and older while in school buildings.

**2. Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings (e.g. masks and face shields)? – Updated 8/19/20**

Schools may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- At least 6 feet apart during “face-covering breaks” to last no longer than 10 minutes.

**3. Do students with disabilities need to wear face coverings?**

Children two years and older are required to wear a face covering unless they have a medical or mental health condition or disability, documented in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or IDEA, that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school. Accommodations for such students should be made in partnership with the student’s health care provider, school nurse, and IEP/504 team.

**4. Will TESD provide face masks or face coverings for students?**

Students are encouraged to bring two reusable face coverings each day, but schools will have disposable face coverings available for those who need them.

**5. How will mask-wearing be enforced?**

TESD will adhere to the PA Department of Health Universal Face Coverings Requirement and will utilize the school code of conduct to support this State order.

**6. Will students and staff be temperature-screened upon entering school?**

Families and staff will be asked to do a daily symptom screening at home and anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 should not report to school/work. The symptom screening includes taking student and staff temperatures each morning before coming to school. In addition, families are asked to monitor PA Department of Health travel advisories.

**7. What steps are being taken to keep students, teachers, and staff safe while in school buildings?**

TESD is following social distancing measures and other safety protocols recommended by health organizations. These steps include:

- Face coverings for anyone entering T/E schools
- Hand-washing/hand sanitizer upon entering school, before/after eating, before/after recess or other transitions, before/after touching shared equipment and throughout the day as needed
- No access to water fountains, use of bottle filling stations and reusable water bottles is encouraged.
- Reduced capacity at all school buildings and social distancing of at least 6 feet when possible
- Increased cleaning and sanitization

**8. How is TESD maintaining the physical distance requirements?**

TESD is taking many steps to promote social/physical distancing:

- At least 6 feet of separation among students and staff throughout the day to the maximum extent feasible
- Manage traffic patterns throughout the building
- No lockers assigned (middle and high schools)
- Student desks arranged in rows facing the same direction
- Use of outside grounds when possible

**9. What building cleaning procedures will be in place during the school year?**

TESD is following enhanced cleaning and sanitization steps during the 2020-2021 school year:

- Hand sanitizer available in common areas and classrooms where sinks for handwashing are not available
- Frequently touched surfaces, including door handles and sink handles are cleaned and disinfected at least daily
- District cleaning supplies meet CDC requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Increased cleaning and sanitizing during the day
- Student desks will be cleaned daily

**10. How is TESD addressing indoor air quality? – Updated 9/18/20**

District HVAC systems meet American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and International Mechanical Code (IMC) requirements for the exchange of outside air and ventilation. All classrooms and large group spaces in the District currently have mechanical ventilation which introduces outside air into the space when the mechanical system is operating. This means District HVAC systems will maximize the exchange of outside air while still maintaining desired temperature and humidity levels. Minimum Efficiency

Reporting Value (MERV) is the industry standard for measuring how well a HVAC filter captures particles. The District will be transitioning to a more robust filter (higher MERV rating) as soon as possible. TESD continues to monitor and follow ASHRAE guidance related to COVID-19. In addition, the District purchased portable HEPA air purifiers for each school's isolation room. This room will be used to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms while in the building.

#### **11. What happens if a student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?**

The District will follow the guidance of the Chester County Health Department (CCHD) for reporting confirmed or probable cases and concerns. Any follow-up communication or cleaning protocols will be based on the specific facts of each case.

CCHD staff will notify the District upon learning that a person with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 was present at the school or a school event while infectious. CCHD staff will assist the District with risk assessment, isolation and quarantine recommendations, and other infection control recommendations.

The CCHD will contact a student or staff member with COVID-19, inform close contacts of their possible exposure, and give instructions to those involved, including siblings and other household members, regarding self-quarantine and exclusions.

#### **12. What are some shared responsibilities between families and TESD?**

- Practice and reinforce social distancing, use of face coverings, and hygiene practices
- Monitor the health of your children, and when in doubt, keep them home
- Travel – be aware of travel advisories. Avoid travel to states on the PA travel advisory list and self-isolate after visiting one of the listed states.
- Please drive your child to school if possible
- Demonstrate flexibility - conditions and guidance change frequently, necessitating changes in our plans
- Be prepared for bumps in the road as we all navigate this unprecedented landscape together.

### **In-Person Instruction**

#### **1. How will in-person instruction be different as a result of health and safety guidelines?**

Because in-person instruction must follow the health and safety guidance, modifications to our typical program will be required. Some examples of modifications include:

- More individual work
- Restrictions on use of shared materials
- Modified group work with classmates
- Limited movement around the classroom
- Teachers working with students in-person and virtually at the same time
- Block scheduling at middle and high schools provides longer instructional periods to vary teaching methods and provide opportunities for individual practice

#### **2. What is block scheduling and why is TESD using it this year?**

A block schedule is a system for scheduling at the middle and high school level in which shorter daily periods are replaced by longer class periods that meet fewer times each week. For secondary students this year, each day will consist of four 85-minute instructional blocks plus time for lunch. Students will have one course scheduled per block per day.

The rationale for block scheduling this year includes:

- Permits time for teachers to utilize a range of instructional strategies, including high-tech and low-tech options, allowing for screen time breaks for students participating virtually
- Provides longer blocks of time for teachers to support all students, both those in the classroom and those participating virtually
- Reduces the number of transitions and times of high traffic in hallways
- Reduces the number of surfaces, including desks, that students come in contact with throughout the day
- Reduces the number of people that students and teachers interact with on a single day

**3. How will students eat lunch in school while social distancing?**

Students will eat lunch in assigned areas throughout the building, which will frequently include their classroom. All lunch groupings will adhere to current PA guidance pertaining to maximum group sizes and directional seating.

Purchased meals will be delivered to students in their designated lunch area to minimize social distancing challenges in the cafeteria lines, or students may bring their own lunch from home.

**4. Will outdoor spaces be used for instruction?**

Yes. Outdoor spaces will be utilized for instruction when feasible and as weather permits.

**5. Will bus transportation be available?**

Yes. Bus transportation will be available; however, it is not possible to consistently maintain social distancing of 6 feet on school buses. If feasible, parents should drive their child to school to assist with social distancing on the buses. Carpooling with other families is discouraged.

Parents will be contacted to indicate if their child will be using bus transportation this year.

**6. What health and safety protocols will be in place on buses?**

Health and safety protocols on school buses include:

- Students will be required to wear a face covering
- Drivers will wear a face covering, unless it is a safety hazard for driving
- Maximum of two students per seat
- Seats will be assigned for all grades K-12
- Open windows on buses when weather permits
- Disinfect buses after each run and nightly

**7. With more parents driving students to school, will there be additional drop off and pick up points at the schools?**

Schools are developing extended drop-off and pick-up times in an effort to make parent transportation a viable option for more families. Additional building entry/exit locations may be used when possible to minimize social distancing challenges in the lobby and bus areas.

## **Virtual Instruction**

**1. Will families be able to select 100% virtual instruction for the entire 2020-2021 school year?**

Yes. Families may choose all virtual instruction for the entire school year.

**2. What do synchronous and asynchronous mean?**

Synchronous instruction is live, real-time, collaborative instruction, usually delivered through Microsoft Teams in TESD.

Asynchronous instruction is not delivered through live, real-time interaction. Asynchronous instruction may be delivered through pre-recorded video lessons or project-based instruction.

**3. Have teachers and staff been trained on how to support virtual and integrated instruction?**

Summer workshops and inservice days, as well as training opportunities will be provided for teachers and staff and include strategies for virtual instruction, integrated instruction and other options related to reopening. On-going technology support and staff development guidance will be available throughout the school year.

**4. How will T/E's virtual instruction this fall be different from what was offered in spring 2020?**

The virtual instruction program offered this fall will include increased live, synchronous instruction of the TESD curriculum at all levels by TESD teachers. Classroom instruction will be live streamed via Microsoft Teams and web cam in the classroom for students attending virtually. Additional information and sample schedules are available in the [Draft Reopening Plans Presentation](#).

**5. Will assignments and tests be graded in virtual instruction?**

Yes. The virtual instruction program will include graded assignments and assessments.

**6. Will there be instruction five days a week?**

Yes. Virtual instruction will be available every school day this year.

**7. Will the District be providing devices to students this year?**

Yes. Students in grades 8-12 kept their District devices over the summer and may use them for virtual instruction during the 2020-2021 school year. Families of students in grades K-7 received information over the summer on how to obtain a District device for their child to use during the 2020-2021 school year.