

PROPOSAL FOR FIRST READING

CCSD **Safe Restart**

Charleston County School District's plan to safely reopen schools in Fall 2020

Charleston County School District is committed to the safe return of students and staff to school this fall. Our "Safe Restart" plan, developed collaboratively by staff and stakeholders, places health and safety as a top priority following recommendations of state and local health experts. The plan is grounded in two basic principles:

- 1) Students' academic, social, and emotional needs can best be met if students are in school.
- 2) Students' and staff's health and safety must be a top priority.

We are faced with issues that require schooling to be different, but that does not mean that we will have to sacrifice the quality of schooling or compromise health and safety. Instead, we will face this as an opportunity to strike a successful balance for the well-rounded health of our students and our community at large. We will remain flexible, and as health and medical conditions change, CCSD will adjust accordingly. The success of this Safe Restart plan requires the awareness, understanding, and support of parents, teachers, staff, students, and the entire CCSD community. As we enter uncharted waters, we will guide our actions around the greater good achieved when students are both learning and healthy.

The following is offered as a summary of the CCSD Safe Restart plan:

SCHOOL START DATE

Current and projected conditions related to COVID-19 have forced the rethinking of the school start date, with a recommendation to move the first day until Tuesday, September 8, the day after Labor Day. We will continue to work with local medical experts, but we believe this position is in the best interest of students and staff given the current COVID-19 spread rate. Teachers will still report to work on Tuesday, August 11 as planned for 5 professional development/classroom work days. Parents will be given a 20-day advance notice of any subsequent change to the school start date.

MEDICAL METRICS

CCSD is working to develop metrics in conjunction with local medical experts in order to inform sound decisions affecting our ability to safely provide instruction in the district as a whole or in individual schools. These metrics will be used to guide the timing of in-person instructional delivery in CCSD.

PARENTAL CHOICES

All CCSD parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to select between in-person school OR virtual school (at-home) for their child prior to the start of school.

IN-PERSON SCHOOL CAPACITIES

CCSD's goal is to safely offer full-time, in-person school for all students, or as many as possible depending on each school. Facility analyses are being conducted in all schools to determine how many students can return to in-school instruction using safe-distancing protocols. Based on current analyses, at least 50% of CCSD schools will be able to bring all students back to school for full-time in-person

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instruction using social distancing protocols. The remaining schools will be able to bring back between 50% and 90% of their students for full-time, in-person.

VIRTUAL ACADEMY: ALTERNATIVE TO FULL-TIME, IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

CCSD will offer a full-time Virtual Academy for students who do not want to participate in in-person instruction for safety reasons. The Virtual model will be offered only online. Participating CCSD teachers will be assigned only to the Virtual Academy. Students will remain on their home school roster, but will receive assignments, assessments, and grades from the Virtual Academy. Courses will be purchased from proven online providers with CCSD teachers delivering content. Internet access and technology will be required. K-8 students may exit Virtual Academy at the end of any 9 weeks; high school students may exit at semester's end.

ALTERNATING SCHEDULE: ALTERNATIVE FOR SCHOOLS WITH LESS THAN 100% CAPACITY

Schools that are not able to bring all students back full-time for in-person will offer some students an alternating schedule. Basically, those students would attend school on an alternating AA-BB schedule. Students would attend in-person two days a week and work at home three days a week. Initially, that would mean "A" group attends in-person on Monday-Tuesday and "B" group attends in-person Thursday-Friday. After the first month, Wednesdays will be converted to an in-person instructional day. Classroom teachers will be responsible for in-school and at-home assignments. At-home assignments that require technology may be downloaded on laptops and sent home with students, and will not require students to have internet connections at home. However, CCSD is working with local internet providers and also understands that the state is working to provide portable wireless hubs to help address this problem.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

CCSD will be guided by the latest health and safety conditions in all facets of the Safe Restart. Working closely with state health agencies and local health experts, CCSD will exhaust our efforts to provide safe and healthy learning environments for students and staff. Flexibility and adaptability are keys to the success, and we will make changes in the start date and operating protocols as needed in consultation with health experts.

CLASSROOM DESIGN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING

DESK ARRANGEMENT: All student seats will be spaced 6 feet apart unless plexiglass dividers are used. Based on the classroom size, the number of students could range from a few to more than 20, using recommended social distancing protocol.

TABLE ARRANGEMENT: Student work tables where 6-foot distancing is not possible will have plexiglass dividers to separate students as they work.

FACE COVERINGS

Students and staff are expected to wear face coverings at all times whenever 6-foot spacing cannot be followed. Students will wear face coverings as they enter the building and move about the building or classroom at all times. Face coverings can be removed when students are seated at their work spaces. Students will also be expected to wear face coverings on buses. (Note: Students who are age two or younger and students/staff with documented medical conditions that would prevent it are not expected to wear face coverings.)

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SANITIZATION AND CLEAN BUILDINGS

CCSD will take extra steps to ensure that all school facilities are providing safe and healthy learning environments, with protocols and actions that include:

DISINFECTION of bathrooms and high-touch surfaces twice each day.

FOGGING with disinfectant equipment of the entire building at least one time a week.

HVAC FILTER upgrades and replacement of older fresh air equipment.

ADDITIONAL WATER-BOTTLE FILLING STATIONS in schools that do not currently have them; disable water fountains.

HAND SANITIZER made available in all classrooms.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

Meals will be provided as usual, but it is expected that students will eat in their classrooms using the “grab and go” model to avoid large gatherings in the school cafeteria.

TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET ACCESS

Schools will limit the sharing of computers and digital devices in classrooms for health and safety reasons. Lack of internet access at home limits students’ ability to access digital resources and participate in online learning. CCSD is working with local internet providers and also understands that the state is working to provide portable wireless hubs to help address lack of internet access in some homes.

BUILDING SECURITY

CCSD will limit access by visitors and parents to schools beyond the front reception area. This is an attempt to only have staff, students, and essential personnel moving about the building.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

CCSD is following guidance from the state that buses can operate at no more than 50% capacity transporting students to and from school. On average, that means a maximum of around 36 students on each route. The number of students needing bus transportation may be a limiting factor in the number of students that can attend an individual school. The Transportation Department is working to maximize the number of bus runs available. Buses will be disinfected twice each day.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

We are aware that many students have experienced greater gaps in their learning since the closing of CCSD schools in March. Per new state requirements, schools and teachers will use a version of the MAP assessment in grades K-9 in order to determine where students are academically when the school year begins. Additionally, we will be using Fastbridge to monitor progress for some of our special needs students and as the universal screening tool to diagnose learning needs among our K-1 students. High school students will use TE-21 for benchmark assessments.

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STUDENT SUPPORTS

The social and emotional needs of staff and students returning to school after a five-month absence must be addressed. Training and support will be provided for staff to ensure they have the necessary tools to create trauma centered, culturally responsive classrooms. Social emotional learning opportunities will be embedded for all students during their instructional time utilizing age appropriate curriculum and activities.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF

During the week of August 11, teachers will have an opportunity to participate in a variety of professional development sessions around the new safety procedures, our online learning tools (e.g., Canvas, our new Learning Management System), and the teaching expectations for a schedule.

We are also purchasing the Zearn Math curriculum which complements the Bridges curriculum and is designed to be taught in-person and virtually. It may be an easier option for teachers if they are teaching in a virtual environment. Additionally, the Curriculum and Instruction Department is working to videotape the teacher-directed portion of the first 20 lessons of our Open Court phonics curriculum, and Bridges Math curriculum in a virtual environment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Teachers and service providers will continue to provide specially designed instruction and/or related services outlined in a student's current IEP or 504 Accommodations Plan. If adjustments need to be made given the instructional model in place for the student (such as Virtual Academy), IEP teams and 504 committees will convene to consider any amendments to special education goals, services, and accommodations to best meet the needs of the student considering any health and safety procedures and the instructional setting.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

As our youngest students may need additional support to adjust to the new safety procedures, students will begin all pre-K programs one week after in-person instruction begins across the district. Teachers then will take a second week to bring students back in small groups for a day at a time to help them learn and adjust to school expectations. This two week delay (opening one week late and having one week with small groups each day) will give principals and teachers time to teach the older children about the new procedures and ease the transition for our youngest students. We also anticipate pre-K classes will be smaller this year to allow for social distancing.

MUSICAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CLASSES

For the safety and well-being of students and teachers, we intend to implement safety guidelines outlined by various state and national Arts organizations such as the National Association for Music Education, the American Choral Directors Association, the National Band Association, and the South Carolina Arts Commission. These guidelines provide specific safety information for a variety of teaching scenarios in band, choir, orchestra, general music, dance, drama, and visual art.

ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULARS

CCSD high school athletic programs are following the guidelines from the South Carolina High School League. CCSD has discontinued all summer athletic conditioning programs due to the high number of COVID-19 cases in our area. The district will continue to re-evaluate this and adjust based on the level of infection in our community.

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MONTESSORI PROGRAMS

Some aspects of the Montessori program delivery will have to be modified based on best practice guidelines provided by the medical community. For example, students will not be able to use shared manipulatives.

COVID-19 TESTING FOR EMPLOYEES RETURNING TO WORK

Testing for school faculty no more than two weeks before returning to work will be highly recommended. Arrangements have been made with medical providers to offer testing free of charge

COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES

Protocols are in-place for notification and prompt contact tracing of COVID-19 positive cases to determine necessary quarantining and facility cleaning.

STUDENT ABSENCES RELATED TO COVID-19

Each day, teachers will continue to record attendance. A student could be recorded as present if the student is participating in instruction in a classroom, at home or virtually that day. If not physically at a school building, students who submit assignments or participate in assigned learning experiences by the deadline established by classroom policy should be considered present.

The district will make appropriate accommodations for students who may be required to quarantine or self-isolate as a result of COVID-19 by offering at home instruction. As long as quarantined students are able to participate in instruction, they will be counted as present.

EMPLOYEE ABSENCES RELATED TO COVID-19

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) requires the district to provide staff members with emergency paid sick leave (two weeks) and/or expanded family and medical leave (up to an additional 10 weeks) for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The FFCRA went into effect April 1, 2020 and is effective through December 31, 2020. In addition to the FFCRA, based on policy GCC/GCD, the district may allow employees to utilize their available accrued leave. Note, the District added an Administrative Rule to policy GCC/GCD that outlines the FFCRA.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO: RETURN TO SHUTDOWN

In the event that COVID-19 cases become even more widespread, CCSD in consultation with state and local health experts could determine that the system needs to shut down in-person instruction. Parents should expect more structured in person online instruction from their child's teacher than was provided in the Spring, with scheduled classes throughout the morning. In preparation, CCSD has been approved as an eLearning district by the state and would be able to provide online instruction with students staying home. This would be a worst-case scenario, and more plans would be shared at that time.

ESTIMATED COST OF PREPARING TO OPERATE THIS YEAR WITH COVID-19 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

(Most of this is calculated; still working to finalize. Will present numbers to Board on or before July 20.)