Dear parents/guardians,

I want to thank you for your patience, grace and flexibility over these past months. I said from the beginning of COVID-19 that the safety of students, staff and the community would be our highest priority and that we would issue re-opening plans based on science provided by our local public health authorities. Now, we’re ready to announce the next steps.

Last night, our Board of Trustees approved a waiver that will allow the district to offer in-person instruction with safety protocols recommended by Tarrant County Public Health from Monday, September 28 to Friday, October 9, on a hybrid schedule (students will attend in-person instruction on certain days) for families who choose in-person instruction. ***Families who choose to continue virtual learning will be allowed to do so.***

**How we got here**

While I’m sure you have many questions about what that means, let me first tell you how we got to this point. For weeks we’ve been telling you how for us to be able to begin in-person instruction we have to meet the metrics put in place by Tarrant County health officials. There is good news on this front:

* The seven-day moving average of people who test positive is now below 10 percent.
* The rate of cases reported in Tarrant County is now below 2,000 per week.
* The seven-day moving average for COVID-like illnesses has been trending lower for more than two weeks.
* The percentage of hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients is less than 10 percent.
* While there haven’t been at least four weeks of data showing stable or declining case counts, we’re moving in that direction.
* We’ve already submitted and had approved our plan for re-opening schools.

My goal is to open schools safely and to ensure that our opening is sustainable. That means limiting occupancy so that we can follow proper contact tracing procedures. When we return to in-person instruction, we expect there to be cases of COVID-19 that will disrupt activities. We want that disruption to be minimal. By following a hybrid model for a short time, we hope to sustain the opening as opposed to ongoing classroom or school closures followed by mandatory quarantine periods. We are aiming for sustainability during the hybrid period.

**The Plan for Virtual Instruction**

Do students have to return to school? No. Our robust online learning platform will continue for those students who prefer to learn virtually. That option will remain in place for the 2020-21 school year. Students will continue to receive the same core instruction as the students who are receiving face-to-face instruction. Meals will still be available from our [28 student-meal locations](https://www.aisd.net/return-to-school-2020/fall-2020-meal-distribution/) for those learning virtually.

**The Plan for In-Person Instruction**

Will school look “normal” for the students who are returning to in-person classes? No. Safety has been and will continue to be our top priority.

* Masks are required for students in grades 1 - 12 and staff.
* Masks are strongly encouraged for our younger learners in Pre-K and kindergarten.
* Social distancing guidelines will be in place.
* All staff and students will participate in daily health screenings and temperature checks.
* All students who opt for in-person instruction will follow a hybrid schedule from September 28 – October 9 so they will only be on campus on certain days.
* Beginning October 13, elementary and junior high schools will provide face-to-face instruction each weekday for families who select this option. High schools will remain in a hybrid model for those who select in-person instruction.

There is signage throughout each campus with reminders about masks, hand washing and social distancing. Following the protocols is the best way to ensure that in-person instruction will be successful and sustainable. That’s the only way it’s going to work.

**What’s next?**

After the hybrid phase, elementary and junior high schools will return to daily in-person instruction for any parents who select that option. A new survey will be sent from your child’s campus in the coming days where you will select your preference for virtual or in-person instruction.

When we return to campus, we know there will be cases of COVID-19. There have been and will continue to be cases in the Arlington ISD. When it happens, we will follow the safety protocols and students and teachers will be required to self-quarantine.

We’re hopeful that our COVID cases remain low; however, in the event of a spike in cases, we will re-visit public health guidance.

Tarrant County Public Health has created a [dashboard](http://www.tarrantcounty.com/schoolguidance) that is specific to the Arlington ISD that will allow you to view public health recommendations for our district.

**How the model works**

We will launch a hybrid in-person learning schedule for Pre-K – 12 students beginning September 28. Students will attend on their scheduled days based on their surname (A-L or M-Z) twice per week and on designated Fridays. You will receive direct communication from your child’s campus with schedule information.

In mid-August, we began daily in-person learning for students in the following programs: Alternate Curriculum, Academic and Behavior Learning Environment (ABLE), Early Childhood for Special Education (ECSE), and Regional Day School Program for the Deaf at Miller ES (RDSPD). Beginning on September 28, students will attend full-day instruction. Additional adjustments will be made as needed.

Thank you again for your patience as we continue to make positive strides. With your help, that trend will continue.

Sincerely,

***Dr. Marcelo Cavazos***

Superintendent