



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, July 17, 2020

For more information, contact:

CPS Office of Communications

Phone: 773-553-1620

Website: <http://www.cps.edu>

Facebook: [ChicagoPublicSchools](https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoPublicSchools)

Twitter: [@ChiPubSchools](https://twitter.com/ChiPubSchools)

Chicago Public Schools Seeks Parent and Community Feedback on Preliminary Reopening Framework for Upcoming School Year

Preliminary Reopening Framework Prioritizes the Health and Safety of Students and Staff; CPS Launches Additional Parent and Student Surveys and Will Host Five Forums to Inform Public and Gather Feedback from Key Stakeholders; Final Reopening Plan Will be Released in Early August and Final Decision on In-Person Instruction Will be Made in Late August Based on Public Health Situation

Key Takeaways from the Draft Framework:

- **Preliminary Framework Follows Guidance from State and Local Health Officials:** The district is following the guidance of state and local health officials and the preliminary framework is designed to adapt to the evolving public health situation. The district will only commence hybrid learning, which includes in-person instruction, if it is deemed safe to do so based on the latest public health guidance.
- **Most Students will Learn at Home and Learn at School through a High-Quality Hybrid Learning Model:** CPS will plan to start the school year with a hybrid in-person and at-home learning model that can transition to fully remote or fully in-person as public health dictates. This plan will allow the district to maximize in-person instruction for students while prioritizing the health and safety of school communities. As part of this plan, students completing in-person learning will be assigned to pods — which are groups of approximately 15 students — designed to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission by limiting interactions between groups of students.
- **Stringent Health Screening and Cleaning Protocols Will be in Place:** Face covering requirements, daily temperature checks, health screenings and cleaning protocols will be put in place. Cloth face coverings will be provided to all students and staff and disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms and throughout school buildings. The district is also hiring approximately 400 additional custodians to execute stringent cleaning and disinfection protocols. The additional custodians will be employed by the district.
- **Additional Parent and Student Feedback is Needed Prior to Final Framework:** Any model used in the fall is going to present challenges for families, and the district is looking for feedback from parents to help inform the final reopening guidelines, which will be released during the first week of August. The district has launched a survey and will hold five virtual meetings to gather feedback.

CHICAGO - Chicago Public Schools (CPS) today released its [Preliminary Reopening Framework](#) that outlines the district's current approach to bringing students back to classrooms if it is safe to do so on September 8. The district's framework utilizes a hybrid learning model, where most students will learn from home and attend school a limited number of days per week, as long as it is considered safe to do so based on latest data from public health officials. In alignment with guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which

encourages schools to provide in-person learning opportunities, the district's hybrid approach would allow for a potential return to in-person instruction while limiting the number of people in school buildings to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The district is encouraging families to provide feedback on the preliminary framework during the next two weeks, which will inform final guidance that will be released in early August. CPS and the City of Chicago will be closely monitoring the evolving public health environment, and a final decision on reopening school buildings will be made in late August based on the health situation at that time.

"This preliminary framework represents the next step in our community-wide discussion on how we ensure our children stay safe, engaged, and resume learning when our school year begins in September," said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "Our dialogue will require that everyone's voices are heard in order to arrive at the strongest possible plan for our students and school communities. COVID-19 has been unpredictable from the start, but whatever form this challenge takes, I want everyone to know that education and learning will be happening this fall."

In order to safely reopen schools, the district is also implementing rigorous public health protocols such as requiring masks, daily health screenings, temperature checks and hiring approximately 400 additional custodians to help carry out stringent cleaning and sanitizing protocols across the district.

"Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our school communities, which is why we have spent months listening to parents and stakeholders and developing a draft reopening framework that prioritizes safety and high-quality instruction for all students," said CPS CEO Dr. Janice K. Jackson. "As the leader of this district and as the parent of two CPS students, I know this has been a challenging time for families. We aimed to create a draft framework that is flexible and capable of delivering high-quality instruction whether students are learning from home or at school. We look forward to gathering feedback from parents and staff so that we can finalize a plan that meets the needs of our school community."

Understanding the critical importance of in-person instruction, ISBE's guidance strongly encourages school districts to provide opportunities for in-person instruction for students. The district's Preliminary Reopening Framework follows health guidance and is designed to respond to the current public health needs and, if necessary, quickly transition to learning from home should the pandemic change its trajectory in Chicago or Illinois.

Adopting a Hybrid Model for High-Quality In-Person and At-Home Instruction

In order to ensure that students return to school in a safe manner, the district will plan to implement a hybrid model, where most students will both learn from home and receive in-person instruction in schools, which will allow for approximately 50 percent of CPS' student population to attend school in-person on any given day.

Given the diverse course scheduling requirements in grades 11 and 12, most high school juniors and seniors will learn from home full time, with schools encouraged to safely bring in juniors and seniors who need additional academic or social and emotional support, or students who are engaged in specialty programming, such as Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming that can't be accessed at home.

Additionally, given the unique needs of students in special education cluster programs, the small size of the programs and the existing layout of spaces, in-person instruction will be available to them every day. If schools have the space and staffing available to allow students back daily, diverse learners and English learners will be prioritized. A chart outlining the shifts by grade is provided below.

Student Population	Attendance Model
Pre-K Full day Programs	Learn-at-School
Pre-K Half-day Programs	Learn-at-School
Students in Grades K–10	Hybrid
Students in Grades 11 and 12	Learn-at-Home
Cluster Program Students	Learn-at-School
Student Population	Attendance Model

As part of this model, students will be placed in pods of approximately 15 students during the school day in order to minimize exposure to other students and to support rapid contact tracing should a member of the pod contract COVID-19. Student pods will receive instruction in assigned rooms with assigned seating and use the same designated spaces in a building, such as bathrooms. Students within a pod will also wear masks and maintain social distancing to the greatest extent possible throughout the school day, with desks spaced six feet apart where feasible.

Through a hybrid 2-1-2 scheduling model, each student pod will spend the same two consecutive days each week learning at school, the same two days learning independently at home, and each Wednesday they will participate in real-time virtual instruction with their classroom teacher. This model will allow students, staff, and families to maintain a stable weekly schedule while affording educators necessary time to plan for various instructional needs.

The district recognizes that the in-person learning environment may not be suited for some students, and we are recommending that students with underlying medical conditions consult their medical provider prior to attending school in-person. Recognizing the unprecedented nature of this pandemic and the need for flexibility, every parent — regardless of whether their student has a medical condition that elevates their COVID risk — will have the option to opt-out of in-person instruction. Staff with medical or caretaking needs will have their leave of absence or accommodation requests addressed through revised procedures that will be communicated in late July.

“Our framework is designed to maximize critical instructional time while prioritizing the health and safety of students and staff,” said CPS Chief Education Officer LaTanya D. McDade. “As a next step, we are eager to hear and incorporate feedback from families to ensure we have the best possible plan in place to meet the needs of all students.”

Enhanced Standards for Hybrid Learning At-Home and In-Person

In order to stabilize the educational experience for students who will be learning from home and from school, the district will be enacting new requirements for learning based on ISBE guidance, including ensuring each student is participating in a minimum of five hours of instruction or school work per day, developing an attendance tracking model for students, transitioning to e-learning on Google platforms district-wide, and

implementing additional measures to further improve the educational experience. Additional details on new learning expectations and improvements will be outlined in early August as part of the final reopening framework.

As part of the hybrid model, the district will continue to work with schools to identify and provide computing devices to students who still need them, and through [Chicago Connected](#), the district will extend hotspot coverage for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) and expand free, high-speed internet access to 100,000 CPS students.

Keeping Students and Staff Healthy Through Stringent Protocols and Resources

The district has spent the months since the closure disinfecting more than 50,000 rooms and procuring the sanitation and health resources needed to safely reopen in the fall at a large scale. As part of our plan, the district is implementing stringent disinfecting and health screening protocols to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and limit exposure to the greatest extent possible. Key measures to promote health and safety include:

Significant Health Protocols:

- **Health Screening:** All students and staff will receive daily temperature checks and complete an online symptom screener questionnaire each day.
- **Face Coverings:** In accordance with ISBE guidance, all people (over the age of 2) in every school building will be required to wear face coverings, except for individuals with a verified medical exemption.
- **Hand Hygiene:** Students and staff will be required to sanitize their hands upon entering the building or after traveling inside the building, and wash their hands after using the bathroom.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols:

- **Staffing:** The district is hiring approximately 400 Board-employed custodians to support stringent cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and ensure soap and hand hygiene stations are consistently stocked.
- **Daily Focus on High Traffic Spaces:** High traffic spaces such as bathrooms will be fully cleaned and disinfected multiple times a day.
 - High touch point areas will also be sanitized multiple times a day, including but not limited to door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, banisters, pencil sharpeners, dispensers and railings.
- **Enhanced Routine Cleaning and Disinfection Program:** Stringent cleaning and disinfection protocols, based on CDC and EPA guidance, will be in place and will occur between cohorts.

Health and Sanitation Resources:

- **Face Masks:** The district has purchased more than **1.2 million** reusable cloth face masks to support every student and staff member.
- **Disinfectant Wipes for Every Classroom:** The district has purchased more than **40,000 containers** of disinfectant wipes for use in classrooms.
- **Hand Sanitizer Dispensers:** Every high traffic area and every classroom will have large hand sanitizer dispensers for a total of **42,000 dispensers**.
- **Thermometers:** Schools will be equipped with more than **22,000 touchless infrared thermometers** for health screening.
- **Hospital-Grade Disinfectant Sprayers:** Every CPS school will receive a hospital-grade mister spray unit that will evenly apply EPA-approved disinfectant for maximum disinfection.
- **Other PPE for Specialty Roles:** The district has also purchased more than 1 million disposable masks, and tens of thousands of gowns, face shields and gloves for positions in need of additional protective

equipment, including nurses, food service staff, bus aides, SECAs, security guards and building engineers.

School-Level Quarantine and Closure Protocol

While every possible measure will be taken to keep students and staff safe, the district has developed protocols in the event a member of the school community tests positive for COVID-19, which includes stringent disinfecting of impacted areas and mandated quarantine procedures for anyone who had close contact. Through the hybrid model, it is possible that a pod would need to be quarantined based on the level of contact, rather than an entire school community. Any decision to suspend in-person instruction or quarantine students or staff will be made in accordance with guidance from state and local health experts.

Collecting Feedback to Finalize Reopening Plan

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for our students, families and staff, and the district's priority is to ensure our plan for the fall best supports everyone in our school communities. More than 50,000 parents responded to the survey and the district conducted over 25 focus groups of students, parents and staff to gain insight into expectations and needs for the fall. This critical input helped the district develop this framework, and direct feedback from stakeholders will continue to guide decision making going forward.

Key takeaways from the surveys and focus groups that were incorporated into the preliminary framework include:

- Overwhelmingly, families want increased hygiene protocols, clear direction on learning expectations, and a lower student-teacher ratio as part of our plan.
- Families have a strong preference for hybrid schedules (compared to a full return), because they lower the student-teacher ratio, effectively creating smaller class sizes during in-person instruction.
- Families favored social and emotional skill building and virtual mentoring when presented with potential options for supports to meet their children's needs.
- Finally, parents want transparency. They want the district to provide them with clear rationales for decision making, and they want us to create spaces for both receiving information and providing feedback.

To gather feedback specifically on the preliminary framework, the district has launched a new survey and will hold five stakeholder meetings; Information on the survey and meetings can be found below:

Survey: Families, students and staff should submit feedback by July 31, 2020. A link to the survey can be found here: cps.edu/reopening2020survey

Virtual Feedback Meetings: The district will hold five meetings (three in English, two in Spanish) on the following dates. Participants must register in advance to participate.

Date: Monday, July 27, 2020

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Language: English

Registration Link: <https://cpsreopeningconversation1.eventbrite.com>

Date: Tuesday, July 28, 2020

Time: 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Language: Spanish

Registration Link: <https://cpsreopeningconversation2.eventbrite.com>

Date: Wednesday, July 29, 2020

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Language: Spanish

Registration Link: <https://cpsreopeningconversation3.eventbrite.com>

Date: Thursday, July 30, 2020,

Time: 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Language: English

Registration Link: <https://cpsreopeningconversation4.eventbrite.com>

Date: Friday, July 31, 2020

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Language: English

Registration Link: <https://cpsreopeningconversation5.eventbrite.com>

Chicago Public Schools serves 355,000 students in 642 schools. It is the nation's third-largest school district.

###