**Frequently Asked Questions**

***Bessemer City School System***

***2020-21 Reopening***

**REGISTRATION**

**Q: Is it too late to register my child for school?**

A: Registration has been up since mid-June. We do encourage parents to register their students as soon as possible.

**Q: I have questions about registration. Who do I contact?**

A: If you are experiencing technical issues, call the 800 number on snap code sheet.

If you are a returning student, you already have a SNAP code. Contact your school if you have issues registering. New students can register without a SNAP code. Follow the instructions on the registration portal.

**Q: When will students receive their schedules?**

A: Once we complete the registration process, we will mail course schedules to the address we have on file OR students may pick them up from school.

**LEARNING OPTIONS**

**Q: How will our students begin the school year?**

A: Bessemer city will begin remotely through the first nine weeks of the school year. We will then reassess and decide whether existing COVID-19 conditions warrant continuing remotely or transitioning toward another learning option.

**Q: What learning options will be available to students this school year?**

A: Due to the recent rise in COVID numbers – Bessemer City School District is offering blended and virtual learning options this year. As a school district, we’ll be going blended, which means your child will be at school nine weeks and do remote learning from home for nine weeks.

**Q: What is the difference between remote and virtual learning?**

A: ***Remote learning*** runs similarly to a school day, with scheduled times to be on with their classroom teacher. The only difference is that students will not physically be in the classroom with their teachers. Students will have scheduled times to be online with their teachers, receiving real-time instruction.

***Virtual learning*** is asynchronous – and students will mostly work at their own pace. If real-time interaction is limited, students may potentially have opportunities like Zoom sessions. Students pursuing virtual learning will follow a pacing guide or a course syllabus to let them know when assignments are due. While virtual students will have a teacher, they will not have frequent immediate interaction with their teacher like students under blended learning models.

**Q: What if my child enrolled in the virtual model, but needs more time with their teacher?**

A: If a virtually-enrolled student needs additional time with their teacher, the teacher will set up separate times to provide the student with extra support.

**Q: How will you ensure students still receive quality interaction with their teachers?**

A: As a district, we are making sure (through video conferencing devices we have purchased) that students can have real time interactions with their teacher remotely during class. The student can watch their teacher, listen to instruction, participate in class, and ask the teacher questions – right from their computers. The teacher can answer any questions the child has as well.

**Q: If my student decides to do virtual learning this year, can they change their minds later?**

A: If you choose for your child to go virtually, they will be able to opt out if you decide the online model does not work for them. The deadline to opt out – or make the switch – is September 4th. They will need to submit a letter requesting to opt out. Students opting out of virtual learning after September 4th should wait until the end of that grading period.

**TECHNOLOGY**

**Q: Will Bessemer City School District provide laptops for all students or will those in the same households have to share?**

A: We have ordered chrome books for each student, grades K-12. Schedules will be distributed for pick up. In the event those ordered are not here on time, the district currently has enough laptops on hand for each family to receive one -- until remaining books arrive for one to one distribution.

**Q: What happens if you checked out a device previously, and have not returned it?**

A: Students/families that have not returned previously checked out devices will not receive a new one. All devices must be returned to your schools, so they can be cleaned and properly updated for the new school year.

**Q: Who do I contact if I’m having technical issues?**

A: You may call the Help Line for assistance at (205) 432-3098. We are available to help.

**Q: Will there still be elective classes, and how will work virtually?**

A: We will offer all of our electives. Students in grades sixth thru 12 will follow a daily remote learning schedule of two periods per day. Choir, like other electives, have standards to be met. Teachers will develop assignments through Schoology, Google classroom, or provide content from School PLP.

**STUDENTS WITH IEP’s**

**Q: How will students with IEP’s be taught?**

A: Parents of children with special needs are understandably very concerned. We have purchased web-based programs for reading and math to allow special education teachers to provide specialized intervention, that targets the needs of students with IEPs. We will assign teachers for any student who selects the virtual learning option. Teachers will maintain office hours and make contact with parents on a regular basis. It is very important for teachers to hear from parents as they are the ones who have been with their children during these past few months.

**Q: How will services be provided for students with IEPs during virtual/remote learning?**

A: We understand there will be times when some of our students with special needs may require more individual services. These services can be done virtually or in-person. They may be conducted either in small group or one on one settings.

In-person services will be provided on campus, by appointment. When at the school, we will follow all school and county sanitization guidelines.

**Q: What if my student needs to be reevaluated or is referred for special education services?**

A: Students who need reevaluations or are referred for special education services, any components that ***can*** be completed virtually – ***will be***. Evaluation components, such as IQ testing, will be conducted in person – following health services protocol.

**Q: How will services be administered for students in self-contained classes?**

A: To service our children in self-contained classes, we have purchased web-based programs that are aligned with the Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards. The programs are implemented by teachers. Currently, teachers are undergoing in-depth training on all facets of the program so that they can use them to work with students on blended, virtual, and traditional learning platforms.

Additionally, we have purchased reading, math, and transition programs as well so that teachers can instruct and monitor the students’ progress. We are confident these programs will allow for a smooth transition.

**GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS**

**Q: Will gifted and talented students still receive services?**

A: Absolutely! Gifted teachers and students will be using Google Classroom. This is where students can find their assignments, enrichment activities, and communicate with their teachers.

**Q: How will pre-K students be taught?**

We have determined that bimonthly packets are the best option for learning for Pre-K students at this time. Therefore, they will not necessarily receive virtual learning. Education packets will be sent home every other week for the students to complete. Pre-K teachers will be regularly available to parents/students who have questions by serving daily office hours.

**Q: How will kindergarten students be educated?**

A: They will have a set curriculum to follow, which will include a combination of both virtual instruction and instructional packets. Teachers will have a schedule to go by. The major focus will be on math and reading daily. Additionally, we are embedding science and social studies standards into the reading standards.

**Q: How will you ensure younger children are receiving social and emotional learning during virtual education?**

A: We have embedded social/emotional learning into the remote learning schedule. We have assigned days for small group activities, intervention, and time for social/emotional learning especially for those kindergarten students.

**VIRTUAL TUTORING**

**Q: Will virtual tutoring be offered for students during remote/virtual learning?**

A: Yes, we will offer virtual tutoring during remote/virtual learning. Details on how to participate will soon be released.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Q: How will you track attendance for students doing virtual/remote learning?**

A: For remote learning, teachers will be able to see the students. Students will be counted present/absent based on whether they see the student in class/online based on that remote time.

Virtual students will automatically be considered present, as teachers review student activity and assignments to determine evidence of participation.

**Q: What if my child has to miss class due to COVID? How will the absence be counted?**

A: Our goal is to make sure student academic success whether remote or traditional environment.

If a student is absent due to COVID 19, those absence will be excused as an illness. Will then proceed to find out when student can safely return to school, per health department standards.

**Q: How many remote hours of instruction will be provided daily by teachers of core subjects?**

A: We will get as close to the typical schedule as possible, but we have scaled back time. Currently, we have scheduled in our remote learning plan to have three hours of instruction per day for students in grades sixth – twelfth. For pre-k thru 5th graders, time can vary from 60 to 120 minutes of virtual face to face instruction. Actual time per virtual class depends on the student’s grade level because attention spans vary, particularly for prek – 1st graders. That’s why prek – 1st grade will have combination of virtual and packet instruction.

**PARENT RESOURCES**

**Q: What is the Parent Academy, and how does it work?**

A: Parent Academy is a series of development sessions designed to help parents understand the various platforms being used as their child learns remotely/virtually. Topics will vary from. They begin the first week of August.

**Q: Will there be morning sessions for those parents who work?**

A: Yes, there will be. We will always be available and open to doing impromptu sessions if we need to. You may also make suggestions for other topics you feel we need to cover. Parents may email any questions or suggestions to Mrs. Jackson or child’s school.

**Q: I heard that the superintendent is planning to host regular discussion sessions with parents. Is this true?**

A: Yes! These virtual sessions are called “Dinner with Doc,” and will occur bimonthly in the evenings. Parents are invited to grab dinner and sit down for an informal chat with the superintendent, Dr. Autumm Jeter, over Zoom. Dinner with Doc offers parents a unique opportunity to interact directly with their superintendent, who will host the sessions from her own home. “Dinner with Doc” will begin in September.

**SCHOOL BUSES**

**Q: Should I allow my child to ride the bus to school or should they be a car rider at this time?**

A: As much as parents can get their children to and from school, we encourage them to do so for safety reasons.

**Q: How will you ensure school buses are clean and sanitized regularly?**

A: We will have hand sanitizers in and mounted. Students will load from back of bus and work their way forward so don’t have to pass each other. Also required to wear masks. Will sit two per seat…with goal of one per seat. Drivers will be required to wear masks and have their temps checked before each shift.

**Q: How often will school buses be sanitized?**

A: After each ride in morning and evening routes, the staff will use electrostatic sprayers/foggers.

**Q: How will you enforce social distancing for children waiting at bus stops?**

A: That’s where we need parents. It is important to remind children regularly to not huddle up with each other or be close to friends. Don’t know where they’ve been day or night before.

**SANITITATION OF FACILITIES & CLASSROOMS**

**Q: What measures will the school district use to protect the health of students and employees while on your campuses?**

A: We have ordered signage for all buildings as reminders to social distance, wash hands often, etc. These signs will be placed on floors, walls, and exterior (doors) so everyone is aware of what is expected to keep students safe. We will maintain six feet separation in classrooms and hallways. Hand hygiene will be taught to students and emphasized continuously and observed throughout the day.

**Q: Are students and staff required to wear face masks?**

A: Yes, everyone on campuses are required to wear appropriate facial coverings as, as directed by the Jefferson County Department of Health.

We have ordered face masks and shields for students and staff; however, parents are strongly encouraged to maintain a supply of face coverings for their children so as not to rely on those from the schools, which may run out depending on demand.

**Q: What will be the process for keeping the buildings properly cleaned and sanitized?**

A: Common surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected on ongoing basis. We have ordered PPE for all students and staff – we have masks and thermometers to use for temps **104** degrees and above. We also have gloves, face shields, wipes, disinfectant, plexiglass and foggers for deep cleaning.

 During remote learning students can come to their schools to pick up grab and go meals. Foggers have been assigned to each school that custodians at end of day can use as needed throughout school. We will also utilize plexiglass, which Bessemer City School District staff will use to build portable dividers, that may be moved wherever needed.

**Q: How will students maintain distance in the classrooms?**

A: Desk shields will be in place as needed. Students will social distance as required by the state health guidelines. some cases, such as lab or stem labs, we will institute dividers.

**Q:** **How will you keep bathrooms clean?**

A: Custodial Staff will wipe down and defog restrooms throughout the day and between classes as needed.

**Q: What can parents do to help/support the safety of our children?**

A: Parents are encouraged to begin safe practices at home now – handwashing, six feet apart, wearing masks in public. Begin now so it can be part of our practices when we reenter buildings.

**CAFETERIA & MEALS**

**Q: How will meals be provided to students during virtual and remote learning?**

 A: We have not stopped serving meals and will continue to serve nonstop.

During the remote learning period, we will alternate weekly between grab and go meals and hot meals. Grab and go meals will be delivered on Mondays of their assigned weeks to designated community sites via the Nutrition Bus.

Beginning the week of Sept. 8th, we will resume serving hot meals, and alternate weekly. These meals will be served at three school sites, from 10:30 – 12:30am Monday thru Friday.

Additional details, including sites where we will serve along with the weekly schedule, are forthcoming and will be posted on the district’s website and social media pages.

**Q: How will students be kept safe inside lunchrooms?**

A: Students Pre-k through 5th grade will receive their meals in the classroom (breakfast and lunch), while 6th-12th graders will go to cafeteria during a designated time to pick up their grab n go meals. 50% of the students attending school that day will return to their assigned classroom or area to eat. The other 50% will remain in the cafeteria to eat their meals.

Designated areas are set by the school principal. Students will be spaced out inside cafeteria as signage will be posted to maintain the 6-ft distance. Designated seats will be marked as to where students can sit.