

Grainger County Schools

Back to School Plan 2020-21

Achieving Safety and Success Together

OPTIONS FOR FAMILIES: In response to parent requests and safety guidelines, Grainger County Schools will provide two options for students in the 20.21 school year:

Option 1: In-School Option

With this option, students will attend classes with daily teacher lead instruction in the student's assigned school. Students selecting the in-school option may attend with **traditional** classroom settings and schedule with additional safety measures in place in the school buildings. Under this traditional option, all students attending in school option would be going to school buildings each school day. We will follow the traditional schedule if conditions for COVID spread are considered as **low** risk for our area. We will continue to monitor state guidelines and health updates.

If there is a surge in cases or new health guidance for our county or state, parents who choose in-school option should be prepared for the potential of optional schedules included in our in-school contingency plans. If our health updates indicate moderate risk of COVID spread, students may be directed to attend school on a **blended** or **modified** schedule where they would attend classes at school some days and work from home virtually with GCS teachers on other days. The blended schedule reduces the total number of students in the school building at one time. The blended schedule would have approximately half of students at school at a time, allowing increased social distancing if needed. Students would follow schedule where they have specific days to attend school physically and specific days to attend classes on-line. In all likelihood, all employees would continue to show up at work every day at school even if we go to a blended or modified schedule.

If conditions are considered at higher risk level for COVID spread, classroom, building, school or entire system may be closed for extended periods of time during the 20.21 school year. During **school closures**, students will receive on-line or virtual instruction. The decision to follow a **Blended** Schedule or **Close** classroom, school or entire system will be determined by school officials for the safety of all students based on current health conditions and updates. Parents and families will be notified when we have to transition from one plan/schedule to another (Traditional, Blended or Closure). Students attending classes in school buildings this year (Option 1) may have times all students attend every day (traditional); periods when students attend some days at school and some

days on-line learning (blended): OR may receive instruction on-line for certain period of time at home if health updates indicate that school closure is required. Employees may be “repurposed” during the 20.21 school year. This applies to all employees. For example, it is possible that some teachers and/or teaching assistants will be pulled from their home school for assistance with the virtual option. This is just one of many ways that the Director of Schools may repurpose employees during the 20.21 school year.

UPDATE: Grainger County Schools will start the 20.21 in-school option schedule on a staggered (modified) entry plan. Students will be grouped (alphabetically by last names) and assigned designated days to attend class in the school buildings and designated days to attend class virtually at home. The staggered entry (modified schedule) is planned through September 3 at this time. Schedule after September 8 to be determined based on health updates. For more information go to: [http://images.pcmac.org/Uploads/GraingerCounty/GraingerCounty/Sites/DocumentsCategories/Documents/GCS%20Staggered%20Schedule%20August%202020\(updated7.25\)%20%7BSIS712384054AA8%7D.pdf](http://images.pcmac.org/Uploads/GraingerCounty/GraingerCounty/Sites/DocumentsCategories/Documents/GCS%20Staggered%20Schedule%20August%202020(updated7.25)%20%7BSIS712384054AA8%7D.pdf).

Option 2: Virtual Option

- With Option 2, students will have daily instruction provided at home for students who do not plan to return to school buildings when school reopens. This option is available for all Grainger County residents and there will be no fees associated with the virtual option for families. The same instructional policies, curriculum standards and student supports will be provided in both options. **Attendance is required and online assignments will be mandatory and will be graded.** GCS plans to utilize Google Classroom as virtual platform to provide instruction and support for students that choose the virtual option. Students will receive support from Grainger GCS faculty and staff. The virtual option will be available to K-12 students; however, our system strongly recommends that students in grades K-2 choose the in-school option if possible due to the significant amount of personal interaction required between student and teacher at that developmental level. The **Tennessee Department of Education has provided guidelines for virtual instruction for students that require 7 hours per school day for virtual/on-line instruction for students in grades 1-12. Kindergarten students will require 4 hours of daily virtual instruction.** Students selecting the virtual option will be allowed to participate in all sporting events just as those attending school daily. The virtual option will allow students to do some of their coursework outside of normal school hours. Students will have some flexibility with daily schedule to complete all of their assigned work; however, there will be some mandatory class meetings, participation or check-ins required during the regular school day.

More information will be provided for parents and students regarding virtual instruction process, device distribution and schedules/plans for daily virtual students through their regularly assigned school. First official school day for **virtual instruction** is planned for **August 24**.

TIMELINE FOR PARENT CHOICE:

Parents can revisit choice for in-school option at the end of first nine-weeks (October, 2020) and nine week-periods throughout the school year. Students not enrolled in virtual option by their parents will be automatically included in the in-school option.

If you **missed the July 24 deadline** and would like to enroll student(s) in the virtual option, **please contact your child's regularly assigned school or visit school website for link to enrollment form.**

ELECTRONIC DEVICE ACCESS AND LEARNING SUPPORT:

If parents enroll their child in Virtual option, they can indicate if they need an electronic device and if they have internet access at home to support virtual learning. The district will announce device distribution process for virtual students.

Students who attend the in-school option will be provided and issued a device to utilize in classrooms and/or home with virtual instruction as needed during periods of blended schedule or closure.

Our plan is to provide multiple online parent/student trainings to support online learning.

PRIORITIZING HEALTH AND SAFETY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Grainger County Schools ("District") has been exploring different and reasonable ways to provide services to all students. The District has worked with state and local agencies, including our local health department, to draft and implement guidelines moving forward regarding cleaning, screening, etc. Though the District and its agents will work hard to implement and abide by those guidelines, neither the guidelines themselves nor even recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") would ever allow the District to guarantee an environment that is entirely free of COVID-19 related risks.

By allowing your child to return to school, you must understand that your child's attendance will require him/her to physically interact with the District's staff members, other students, and even some limited volunteers. As such, despite all reasonable efforts on behalf of the District, physical interaction with the public at large may pose some unavoidable risks to you, your child, and your family due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the District hopes that everyone remains safe and

healthy during this trying time, we also want to remain both honest and transparent with our parents about the very real risks posed by COVID-19 both inside and outside of our schools.

Our system safety recommendations and plans include, but are not limited to:

- Increased cleaning and disinfection of all buildings and buses daily;
- **Face coverings or masks for all students and staff (PreK-12) are required** in common areas such as hallways, cafeteria lines, and gyms in school buildings and on buses unless contraindicated for health reasons.
- Masks will be **provided** by school system for both students and staff;
- Masks are recommended for classrooms and may be **required** for staff and students in classrooms for **certain instructional settings and ADA requirements**;
- Requirements for masks may be **adjusted** as indicated by traditional or blended schedule, number of active cases and other health updates.
- Increased social distancing as feasible in classrooms, hallways, buses;
- Temperature checks and health monitoring of staff and students daily at school. Temperature checks will not take place at the bus stop.
- Not allowing anyone with fever or symptoms to remain at school;
- Frequent hand washing and access to hand sanitizer for all classes; Hand sanitizing stations are being installed in all schools.
- Reduced class interactions and hallway traffic, group gatherings and movement throughout the buildings;
- Water fountains will **not** be used. Touch free filtered water stations will be provided for students to fill their water bottles.
- Access to schools will be limited to essential personnel and students. If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent or guardian entering the school, approval must be given by the school administrator.
- Any visitors approved by school administrators will be **required** to wear mask, have temperature check and answer health screening questions;
- Other various safety measures.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

- All staff will wear masks and gloves during food preparation and service.
- Grab and go breakfast options will be available and will be delivered or distributed as decided by school officials.
- Lunch schedules will be adjusted to maximize social distancing.
- Lunch will be delivered or distributed as directed by school officials.
- Students may have lunch in cafeteria, gym, classrooms or other location. This will be determined by school officials and shared with parents. The lunch location may change. For example, we may start serving lunch in the cafeteria but later decide to transport meals to classrooms.
- Visitors will not be permitted in school cafeterias.

TRANSPORTATION

- All buses will run on a regular schedule.
- Students will be assigned a seat.
- **Masks are required for all students grades PreK-12 on buses** (unless contraindicated for medical reason) and will be provided.
- Buses will be sanitized after morning and afternoon routes and hand sanitizer will be provided on buses.

SCHOOL CALENDAR 2020-21:

Currently our school calendar has an **August 17** start day for in-school students. We will have a staggered schedule for students attending in-school option through September 3. (See Staggered Schedule Information on website. First instructional day for virtual students will be August **24**.)

Watch for more information and updates available in next week's Grainger Today and on our Grainger County website (<http://www.grainger.k12.tn.us/>) and system Facebook page. Parents can email GCS2020@gcs123.net or call 865-828-3611.