RETURN TO LEARN
Decatur Public Schools #61

www.dps61.org/returntolearn
The health and safety of our students, staff, and families is of the utmost importance as we prepare to return to school. When the 2020-2021 school year begins, school will look much different than previous years, due to the new health and safety measures in response to COVID-19.

*PreK-12 students in Decatur Public Schools will do 100% virtual learning for the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. The first day of student instruction will be pushed back to Monday, August 17, 2020.*

**EQUITY & ACCESS**

Decatur Public Schools is committed to equity and access to quality instruction for all students supported with safe and best practices during a pandemic. Our schools have a responsibility to be culturally responsive and meet the needs of ALL students, including language support for English learners and support for students with disabilities. All students must have opportunities that are accessible, personalized, culturally relevant, and responsive in order to achieve academic success.
Decatur Public Schools recognizes the social emotional impact of the pandemic including fear, loss, and isolation.

The District is committed to increasing mental health supports for students in the upcoming school year. For our staff, the District's EAP program is available to those needing services.

Our school staff will work with families to check on the well-being of our students. Daily engagement during Virtual Learning between teachers is encouraged so we can assess student needs and provide support during this challenging time.

### SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

**How can families prepare at home?**

**TALK TO YOUR CHILD**
about why school will look different this year.

**MODEL AT HOME**
the steps recommended by the CDC to prevent the spread of germs.

Encourage your child to **ASK QUESTIONS** and communicate their feelings.
Why Virtual Learning?

By making the decision to begin the school year with virtual learning only, we are prioritizing the health and safety of students, staff, and their families first and foremost. While school will look very different this fall from what our families are used to, our mission remains the same: ensuring that each and every DPS student receives a high-quality and meaningful education.

Attendance and Grading

Even though students will be learning virtually from home, they will still be required to check in with teachers for daily attendance and will still receive grades for classwork. Grading for the 2020-2021 school year returns to normal expectations.

Internet Access Assistance

In order to address the digital divide that impacts many families, DPS is offering assistance to ensure those families have internet access. Reach out to your student's school if you need assistance to get internet access in your home.
HOW LONG WILL VIRTUAL LEARNING LAST?

Students will learn virtually for the start of the school year through the first quarter. As we approach the end of the First Quarter on October 9, 2020, DPS will consult with health experts to determine if a return to in-person instruction is feasible and advisable.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOMESCHOOLING AND VIRTUAL LEARNING?

DPS Virtual Learning is NOT homeschooling. When parents/guardians choose to homeschool, they must provide the curriculum and all instruction. With DPS Virtual Learning, the District provides state-approved curriculum, your student's teacher(s) will provide instruction and support, and your student remains enrolled in Decatur Public Schools.
Decatur Public Schools will implement the following practices that prioritize protecting the health and safety of our students, staff, and visitors within all DPS buildings.

**DAILY SELF-CERTIFICATION**
Students, staff, and building visitors will be required to complete self-certification wellness screenings before arriving at/entering any DPS building.

**MASKS REQUIRED IN BUILDINGS**
As required by the Illinois Department of Public Health, face coverings must be worn at all times in DPS buildings, even when social distance is maintained.

**INCREASED CLEANING AND DISINFECTING**
DPS custodial staff will increase focus on wiping down and disinfecting public spaces and high-touch surfaces across our buildings and throughout the day.

**STEPS IF A STUDENT OR DPS STAFF MEMBER TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19**
If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the district will work with the Macon County Health Department to determine the exposure level and action plan.
Social Distancing Protocols
According to the CDC, social distancing is a simple yet very effective mechanism to prevent potential infection that relies on simple distance to avoid infection.

In practice this means:

- Staying **6 feet away from others** as a normal practice.
- Eliminating contact with others, such as **handshakes or hugs**.
- Maintaining a social distance of 6 feet **throughout the day** whenever possible.
- Where a minimum distance cannot be maintained, please follow guidelines regarding **face coverings**.

Face Coverings
Face coverings must be worn by all employees of Decatur Public Schools at all times in the following situations:

- Employees may use either a District-issued or a personal face covering, depending on personal preference.
- While working in a district facility, employees who have their own office space are not required to wear a face covering when alone in their office.
- When working closely with a student or staff member, including small groups, everyone in the meeting or group is required to wear a mask or facial covering at all times.
Potential Exposure or Confirmed COVID-19 Illness

If a student or staff member is sick, or a person within your household is sick, please do not come to school or work. If you become ill while at work, immediately isolate yourself, tell your supervisor, and go home.

The District facility or building where the student or staff member was located will be closed if needed to be sanitized and thoroughly cleaned.

Notify the building Principal or Human Resources, if you/your student have symptoms associated with COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with or is showing symptoms of COVID-19. Close contact is defined as being 6 feet or less for more than 15 minutes without wearing a mask.

The Macon County Health Department may be notified if the district becomes aware of a staff member or student has tested positive, and may include those individuals in "close contact" to assist with the MCHD in their contact tracing efforts.

“This is certainly not the start to the 2020 school year that we would have hoped for, but we know that it’s ultimately the best decision we can make for students, staff, and all our DPS families to prioritize their health and safety. From teachers and principals to parents and students, I want to thank everyone involved in the planning process. It took a lot of time, difficult conversations, and many changes along the way.”

DR. PAUL FREGEAU, SUPERINTENDENT