

**KCS CONNECT**

*Fall 2020*

**District Guide for Reopening  
Knox County Schools**

**July 15, 2020**

**(Updated August 5, 2020)**

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# Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of our daily lives, including how we educate students. Despite the many hurdles that lay ahead, we are committed to having students and staff return to classrooms safely in the fall, while also providing a virtual option for families who are not comfortable sending their child back.

At the same time, it's important to acknowledge that school will look different this year, and as a district we'll need your patience, your understanding and your flexibility as we move forward.

While the obstacles posed by COVID-19 may seem daunting, I'm heartened by two things. First, each school in our district includes a team of strong and decisive administrators; talented, compassionate and innovative teachers; and caring, dedicated support staff.

These educators are fully committed to our mission of teaching and learning, while also determined to protect the health and safety of our school communities. I'm confident in their ability to meet the challenge of this moment and make the day-to-day decisions necessary for students to be successful.

Second, after being part of this district and this community for more than 40 years, I know that the people of Knox County are resilient, resourceful and caring, and those traits will serve us well as we embrace this mission together.

We understand that our reopening may not go perfectly on Day 1, and we will make some mistakes along the way. But please know that we're working hard to make wise decisions and to implement them effectively.

I'm grateful for your support and your trust. Everyone has a role in making our reopening a success and it *will* take all of us working toward the same goal of providing an environment that is safe for our kids to learn and our educators to teach.

I know that we can do it together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Thomas  
Superintendent  
Knox County Schools

# Introduction

In March 2020, Knox County Schools (KCS) closed its school buildings due to the COVID-19 pandemic and state of emergency declared by Gov. Bill Lee. While students were not able to return for the remainder of the school year, the district provided opportunities for families to take advantage of voluntary educational resources through its KCS@home initiative.

Recognizing the need to be better prepared in the event that our school buildings are closed due to COVID-19 or other emergency situations, and to provide educators with another tool in the classroom, the district took steps to become a 1:1 school system. In May, the Knox County Board of Education and Knox County Commission approved a plan to provide every student with a Chromebook for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year.




To give our principals and teachers more time to prepare, KCS will delay the start of school for students. The first day of school is now scheduled for Monday, Aug. 24, 2020. This will require the district to use ten inclement weather days. Teachers will still report to work on Monday, Aug. 3, 2020.

K-12 families will have two options for enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year.

1. In-person learning on school campuses, with safety measures implemented to reasonably protect the health and safety of our students and staff.
2. A virtual learning program for families who are not comfortable with a return to the classroom.

The enrollment period for the virtual learning program will open at noon on July 15, 2020 and will close at 11:59 p.m. on July 22, 2020. Currently enrolled students will be sent an email detailing how to enroll online via Aspen Family Portal. For any student not registered in a Knox County school or who does not have internet access, families should visit the student's zoned school. *Students who elect to enroll in the virtual learning program will be committed to this option for the entire semester.*

Those who enroll in the virtual learning program will continue as planned regardless of COVID-19 conditions. For other students, the district has created three primary models in preparation for the upcoming school year:

1. On-campus learning with standard operating protocols (  )
2. On-campus learning with increased COVID-19 safety protocols (  )
3. Virtual/remote learning only (  )

This plan was created based on the current public health information available and valuable feedback from our stakeholders, especially our families and staff. It will be revisited continuously and any changes – including a shift between green, yellow and red models – will be communicated through all the district's notification methods including email, voice call, text, social media and website. The district will start the 2020-2021 school year in the yellow model.

# How We Got Here

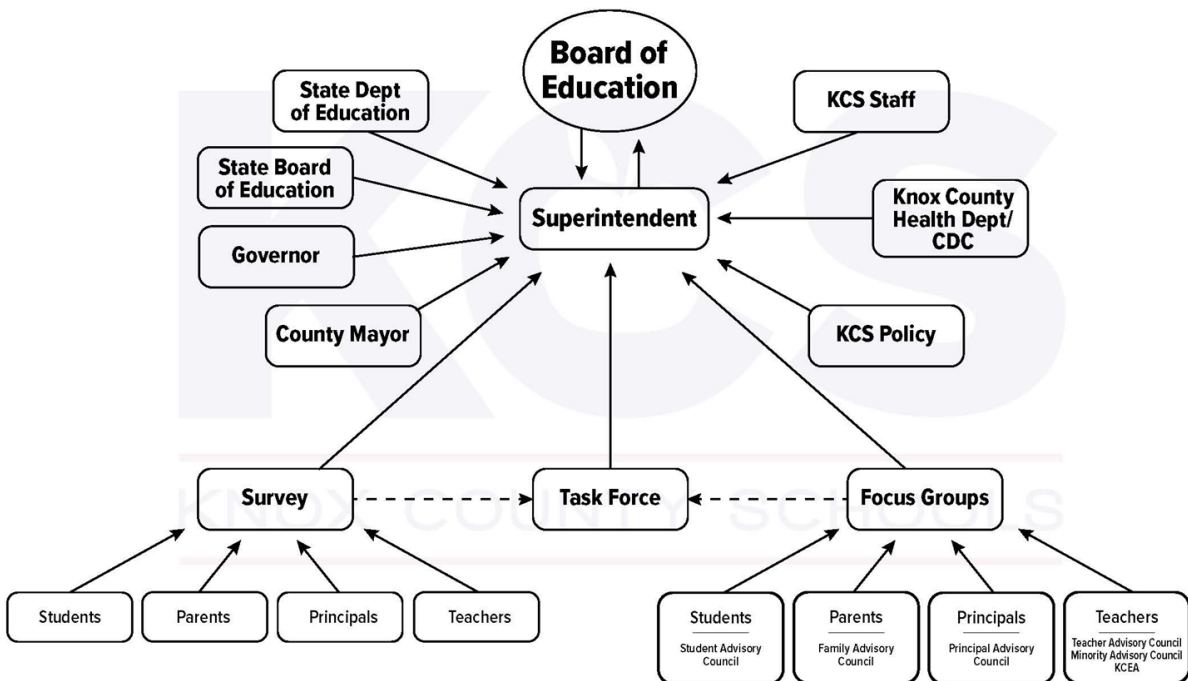
Knox County Schools wants to make sure that the work of teaching and learning moves forward in the upcoming school year, while also ensuring that the health and safety of our students, staff, and families is protected.

In order to do this, the district recognized that feedback from stakeholders was an essential part of the planning process. With that in mind, the district created a multi-faceted strategy to provide guidance from all of our stakeholders and to help Superintendent Bob Thomas and the Board of Education make decisions about the fall semester.

More information about our online survey; focus groups of teachers, students, principals, and parents; and the community task force is below.

In addition, our district has received guidance from the Tennessee Department of Education and Gov. Bill Lee throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are in constant communication with the medical experts at the Knox County Health Department. We will continue to work closely with these state and local partners as we prepare for the upcoming school year.

## KCS FALL 2020 STAKEHOLDER INPUT



## Community Survey

To help us better understand the thoughts and concerns of our stakeholders for the upcoming school year, we asked students, families, and KCS employees to complete a short survey.

The survey included 14 questions on topics including transportation, online learning, and the school calendar. It was available from June 1 through June 19, in English and Spanish.

The results are available at [knoxschools.org/connect](https://knoxschools.org/connect), on the right rail under “Reopening Feedback Documents.” A summary version of the results is available at [this link](#), and included the following findings:

Total respondents: **32,577**

**54%** of parent respondents preferred a physical reopening of schools, assuming Knox County was in at least Phase 2. Only **15%** of parent respondents preferred an online-only option.

**52.2%** of teacher respondents preferred a physical reopening of schools, assuming Knox County was in at least Phase 2. Only **11%** of teacher respondents preferred an online-only option.

**53%** of parent respondents and **58%** of teacher respondents agreed that student temperature checks should be a minimum safety requirement.

## Focus Groups

Reopening decisions will directly affect teachers, students, parents, school administrators and non-profit partners. To make sure their voices were heard, the district organized focus groups representing each of these stakeholders.

The focus groups for teachers, students, parents and school administrators met with the KCS Research, Evaluation and Assessment Department and met separately with Superintendent Bob Thomas. The focus group for non-profit partners met with District Ombudsman Tammi Campbell.

A list of focus group members is included below:

## Teacher Focus Group

**Lynn Shuryan**  
Norwood Elementary

**Elishia Basner**  
West Hills Elementary

**Heather Deyton**  
Fulton High

**Dave Brooks**  
Adrian Burnett Elementary

**Megan Christian**  
Bearden High

**Tanya Coats**  
KCEA President

**Tiffany Collins**  
Green Magnet

**Dave Gorman**  
Cedar Bluff Middle

**Anthony Hancock**  
Bearden Middle

**Cedelle Niles**  
Farragut High

**Natasha Patchen**  
Copper Ridge Elementary

**Michelle Staal**  
Northwest Middle

## Principal Focus Group

**Katie Lutton**  
Holston Middle

**Tanna Nicely**  
South Knox Elementary

**Tim Berry**  
South-Doyle High

**Kristi Woods**  
East Knox Elementary

**Shaunna Foster**  
Karns Elementary

**Rachel Harmon**  
West Valley Middle

**Tye Sutton**  
Karns High

## Student Focus Group

**Asia Chesney**

**Angel Dixon**

**Jansen Dobbs**

**Addie Fields**

**Alexander Gadd**

**Lane Kepper**

**Abigail Lee**

**Madison Turner**

## Parent Focus Group

**Adrienne Brown**

**Robyn Cooper**

**Jessica Lucas**

**Omary Rodriguez**

**Mary Terry**

**Angie Bush**

**Yana Truman**

**Frances Vineyard**

**Senetra Weaver**

## After-school Childcare Focus Group

**Sindy Dawkins-Schade**

Shades Of Development

**Cheryl Ball**

Knox Education Foundation - Community Schools

**Eli Cockrum**

YOKE

**Lori Humphreys**

YMCA of East Tennessee

**Kara Finger**

Wesley House

**Markus Jackson**

Boys and Girls Clubs

**Kathy Mack**

YWCA of East Tennessee (Phyllis Wheatley)

**Laschinski Emerson**

A-1 Learning Connections

**Megan Barolet-Fogarty**

Centro Hispano de East Tennessee

**Chrystal Brown**

Emerald Youth Foundation

**Shara Shoup**

Emerald Youth Foundation

## Community Task Force

To provide an additional layer of insight, the district created a Community Task Force. The task force was led by Dr. Jerry Askew, President of the Alliance for Better Nonprofits, and its members were appointed by the Board of Education.

The task force was charged with reviewing data from the survey and focus groups and providing additional insights and perspectives on the proposed reopening options. Public meetings were held on June 24, 2020 and June 29, 2020, and Dr. Askew presented the Task Force's findings to the Board of Education on July 8, 2020.



The members of the Task Force were:

- District 1: Rev. Sam Brown, Pastor at Logan Temple
- District 2: Joan Grim, University of Tennessee Theory & Practice in Teacher Education
- District 3: Melanie Craig, PTSO Board Member
- District 4: Jonathon Fortner, President of Sequoyah Elementary Foundation
- District 5: Susie Carr, KCS Parent/PTSO Board Member
- District 6: Michelle Pickler, Community/School Volunteer
- District 7: Rob Cummings, KCS Parent/School Administrator
- District 8: Steve Hunley, Publisher/Local Business Owner
- District 9: Brannan Gillenwater, KCS Parent/Local Business Owner

## Health and Wellness

While Knox County Schools believes it is critical to return to the classroom in the fall, the district is committed to the health and wellness of everyone in its school buildings. KCS has outlined required and recommended health practices and strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Because each school is unique, not all of these will be possible all the time and should be adapted as appropriate.

KCS will continue to collaborate with the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) and take into consideration guidance from the CDC, Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Department of Health and the Governor's office.

The district recognizes that our students and staff are experiencing strong and complex emotions during this time. School staff and counselors will regularly check the well-being of students. District officials and administrators will continue to support the well-being of staff.

### **Knox County Schools daily decision process**

Knox County Schools will continue to consider several data points for determining the instructional delivery model each day, including:

- Student attendance rate
- Teacher attendance rate
- Support staff attendance rate (bus drivers/cafeteria workers/custodians)
- Substitute fill rate
- Consultation with the Knox County Health Department

Students and staff should not come to school if they experience COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case. In any of these instances, school officials should be notified immediately.

### **In response to a reported positive COVID-19 case**

- If the district is made aware that a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19, district officials will immediately notify local health officials.
- The KCS Health Services Department will work with KCHD to initiate contact tracing protocols to determine how widespread the potential exposure is and notify families and staff members impacted.
- If the student or staff member is on a school campus, he or she will be isolated until they can be transported off campus.
- If there is an incident on campus that might pose a threat of exposure to COVID-19, families and staff will be notified while maintaining confidentiality.
- A decision will be made in consultation with the KCHD regarding a school(s) closure to allow for additional measures to clean and sanitize the facility, based on the information provided by the reporting party.
- Depending on the nature of the exposure, a recommendation could be limited to specific classrooms or groups.
- If a school(s) is closed, families and staff will be notified through the KCS phone/email notification system.
- If a school(s) is closed, students and staff will immediately move to online instruction via Canvas and Microsoft Teams.
- Any student who must be quarantined due to COVID-19 at the direction of the Health Department, or a physician, will be given the opportunity to move to the virtual learning program and return to school upon meeting the required criteria.
- Any employee who must be quarantined due to COVID-19 at the direction of the Health Department, or a physician, may use 10 days of emergency sick leave pursuant to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA).

### **What Can You Do?**

*Everyone* has a role in keeping our schools a safe place to learn and teach. Please review the following to help maintain a successful reopening.

- Make it a habit to wash your hands several times a day.
- Utilize hand sanitizer provided in each classroom.
- Maintain six feet of space between you and others whenever possible.
- Wear a mask where required and when physical distancing isn't possible.
- Check your temperature before coming to school. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or higher should stay home.
- If you are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, do not come to school. Seek medical attention as needed.
- Know the rules for visiting your child's school.

# On-campus Learning

## Staff arrival procedure

- Staff should follow the standard operating procedures for their school.

- Principals at each school will set an equitable duty schedule for their staff to the extent possible.
- Employees will have their temperature checked each day upon arrival.
- Each employee should self-screen before reporting for work.
  - Ask, have you within the last 14 days:
    1. Been told to quarantine or isolate by a medical provider or health department
    2. Had close contact with someone who has COVID-19
    3. Experienced any COVID-19 symptoms?
      - a. Fever/chills
      - b. Cough
      - c. Shortness of breath
      - d. Difficulty breathing
      - e. Fatigue
      - f. Muscle or body aches
      - g. Headache
      - h. New loss of taste or smell
      - i. Sore throat
      - j. Congestion or runny nose
      - k. Nausea or vomiting
      - l. Diarrhea

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, an employee must notify their supervisor.

- Staff may be asked to return to the school building when students are not present.

## Students arrival/dismissal procedure

- Families should follow the standard operating protocols for their school.

- Families should drop students off and pick them up through the car rider line or drop off at the front door if walking. No families will be allowed to escort their child inside the school building.

- Students will have their temperatures checked each day upon arrival. Students with temperatures of 100.4 or above will be isolated from other students.
- Schools will have plans in place to limit students congregating in large groups while waiting for screenings and to be dismissed from class.
- An increase in traffic is expected at all campuses. Schools will be providing additional support to car rider lines to expedite the flow of traffic.

- 
- Not applicable

## **Bus transportation**

KCS will continue to provide bus services to students on their normally scheduled routes; however, physical distancing is not feasible on school buses. Students who have a fever or other symptoms of illness should not ride the bus or attend school.

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- Eligible students choosing to participate in school transportation will continue to receive transportation services as in previous years.
  - Buses will be disinfected following morning and evening runs with a COVID-effective agent provided to contractors by KCS. KCS will also provide training in the proper use of the disinfectant.

- 
- Bus contractors will be responsible for implementing a pre-route driver temperature check to ensure no driver has a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher.
  - Bus and shuttle drivers will be required to wear an appropriate mask at all times while operating a vehicle.
  - Students will be required to wear an appropriate mask while in transit.
  - Students should wash their hands with soap and water prior to getting on the bus.
  - Recognizing that it is not always feasible to physically distance on a school bus, riders should put as much space as possible between others to the extent possible.
  - Siblings are encouraged to sit together when possible.
  - Weather and other conditions permitting, all windows on non-air conditioned buses will be open and air conditioning systems on so-equipped buses will not be operated in the recirculation mode.
  - Buses will be disinfected following morning and evening runs with a COVID-effective agent provided to contractors by KCS. KCS will also provide training in the proper use of the disinfectant.

- 
- No school transportation will be required.

## Visitors to school

See-through barriers have been installed in the front office of each school.

- Visitors will follow the standard operating protocols and policies for coming to a school campus.

- Visitor access will be restricted to essential personnel and those who have scheduled appointments for school business that cannot be conducted over the phone or by email.
  - All visitors will be required to wear an appropriate mask.
  - All visitors will be expected to adhere to physical distancing requirements.
  - All visitors will be subject to temperature checks. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 or greater must reschedule.

- Not applicable

## Masks and hygiene measures

### Masks

Because physical distancing is not feasible on many school campuses, masks will be required.

- No masks will be required.

- All staff will be required to wear an appropriate mask while on campus when physical distancing isn't possible and unless there is a medical condition preventing it.
- All students will be required to wear an appropriate mask while on campus when physical distancing isn't possible unless a student is unable to remove a mask/face covering without assistance or has a medical condition or other need preventing it.
- Face masks will be provided to staff and students if needed.
- School administration reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of a mask.

- Not applicable

### Temperature checks

Schools have been provided touchless thermometers at the ratio of 1:40 students to facilitate the completion of this task as outlined. During the yellow model, all students, staff and visitors will be

temperature-checked upon arrival in order to identify individuals with fevers. Each person entering a school building must adhere to this process. Students and staff should stay home when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

- 
- No temperature checks required.

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- If a student or staff member has a temperature of 100.4 or greater, they will be isolated for further screening and remain there until they can return home.
  - All students will have their temperature checked upon arrival. Students with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater will be isolated, and parents will be called to pick them up.
  - A student with fever and no other symptoms must be fever-free without the assistance of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours before returning to school.
  - A student with fever and COVID-19 symptoms must remain home for 72 hours and have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation and have consulted their primary care provider.
  - All staff will have their temperature checked upon arrival. Staff with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater will return home.
  - A staff member with fever and no other symptoms must be fever-free without the assistance of fever-reducing medications for 24 hours before returning to school.
  - A staff member with fever and COVID-19 symptoms must remain home for 72 hours and have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation and have consulted their primary care provider.
  - All visitors will have their temperature checked upon arrival.

- 
- Not applicable

### **Cleaning procedures - ALL**

Buildings will undergo daily sanitizing for high-touch areas such as doorknobs, handrails, and countertops using a COVID-certified disinfectant. Common areas such as administrative areas, libraries, cafeterias, auditoriums, gymnasiums, and hallways will be misted with a COVID-certified disinfectant daily. Classrooms will be cleaned per the district's standing protocols and as needed; they will be misted at least every other day. Restrooms will be monitored and disinfected multiple times each day. Additionally, each classroom will be provided with hand sanitizer and disinfectant.

Buildings will also be disinfected either in part or in their entirety as may be necessary following a positive COVID diagnosis of a student or staff member. Custodial shifts and hours may be adjusted to support these requirements.

HVAC systems meet or exceed industry standards and are balanced, on average, to exchange the indoor air with fresh outside air about three times each hour, and they are never turned off. A preventative

maintenance program ensures the units' filters are regularly replaced and the units are serviced and cleaned.

## **Physical distance and group gatherings**

### **Classrooms/Common areas**

- Standard seating protocols will be followed.

- Classrooms will be structured to facilitate physical distancing of six feet to the extent possible.
- Class sizes and scheduling will vary by school based on space available and design.
- Assigned seating will be encouraged to the extent possible.

- Not applicable

### **Assemblies**

- Mass gatherings such as assemblies and pep rallies should not be held unless appropriate physical distancing can be maintained.

### **Field trips - ALL**

In order to maximize instruction time, field trips will not be allowed during the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. This decision will be reviewed at the end of the semester. Virtual field trips are encouraged, where feasible.

### **Recess**

- Standard recess protocols will be followed.

- Playgrounds will be open to schools during the school day.
- Students should adhere to physical distancing as appropriate.
- Students may remove masks when outdoors so long as physical distancing can be maintained.

- Not applicable

### **Athletics/Extracurricular Activities**

- KCS follows TSSAA / TMSAA guidelines related to sports seasons and calendars and the guidance of the Knox County Health Department for the health and wellness of our student-athletes.

- All other extracurricular activities should adhere to the guidelines outlined in [Tennessee Pledge](#), including but not limited to the size of groups and physical distancing.
- Students who enroll in the virtual learning program will be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities.

## Meal service

KCS will provide meal service during the upcoming school year, with a continued emphasis on handwashing, personal hygiene, and cleaning/sanitizing food contact surfaces as part of standard operating procedures. See-through barriers will be installed at the point of sale. Students who are enrolled in the virtual learning program may receive meals through their base school, and families should contact the School Nutrition Department to facilitate meal pickup details.

- Meal service will follow standard operating protocols.

- The cafeteria manager will be responsible for checking the temperature of all food service personnel each day prior to work. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater will be sent home.
- Masks will be provided and required during meal preparation and service.
- Students will wear masks while going through the meal line. Masks are not required while eating or drinking.
- Single-use gloves will be provided and required for handling and delivering of food.
- Meals will be served in clamshell containers with plastic flatware.
- Physical distancing will be implemented to the greatest extent possible during meal distribution and consumption.
- Students will be allowed to eat in any area of the school, including the classroom and cafeteria as determined by the principal. Assigned seating will be encouraged to the extent possible.

- In the event of an extended closure due to COVID-19, KCS will provide take-away meals for students to the extent possible allowed by federal regulations. Meal sites will be designated at the time the initiative is implemented.

## After-school childcare providers

The district values its partnership with childcare providers that serve KCS families and will continue to collaborate and improve our communication with them. Each contracted after-school provider must submit a plan to the Elementary Department before the start of school that aligns with the KCS reopening plan and the specific program guidance from the Tennessee Health Department and CDC.



# Academics

All KCS students will have two instructional options: 1) a return to in-person instruction on school campuses, with the implementation of additional health and safety measures; or 2) enrollment in the virtual learning program.

Families who choose the virtual option must register by July 22, 2020 through the Aspen Family Portal. Students who elect to enroll in the virtual learning program will be committed to this option for the entire semester. Students who are new to KCS will be required to enroll in their zoned school and register online at their school.

To help families make an informed decision, details about on-campus instruction and the virtual learning program are available below. In addition, our [Academics And Virtual Option FAQ](#) document includes answers to many common questions.

## Option 1: On-campus instruction

This option reflects the addition of significant health and safety measures designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Details about masks, temperature checks, physical distancing, meals and other topics are available in our [Health And Safety FAQ](#).

The on-campus option will provide instruction in a traditional manner, adjusted for health and safety requirements. Grading, homework, testing and attendance will be largely similar to prior years.

## Option 2: Virtual instruction

Unlike the emergency closure in the spring, this online opportunity will more closely align with the rigor of an on-campus classroom, including instruction on new material, graded assignments and testing.

The virtual program will **not be able to offer all course options** available at our traditional schools, but all students will remain on track for progress to the next grade and for graduation. **Certain class activities are not feasible in the virtual option for hands-on and performance-based courses.**

Each school will have a virtual learning program. Students will remain enrolled in their school and be taught by a certified teacher. The virtual learning program will be run primarily through the base school. In the event the base school cannot accommodate a student's course request, KCS has expanded the district's distance learning program, QuEST, to supplement classes that cannot be provided by the base school. Students will continue to be enrolled in their zoned school but will be taught by a certified QuEST teacher for their grade level. There will be communication between the QuEST teacher and the zoned school throughout the duration of enrollment.

Virtual learning program teachers will be available to students via multiple platforms. State-required student-teacher ratios for each grade band will be the same in both virtual and on-campus classrooms.

In addition, students in the virtual learning program will have opportunities to interact with other virtual students through the varied methods utilized during the virtual program.

- Class size will mirror that of the traditional classroom.
- Classes will meet remotely through Microsoft Teams, and Canvas will be the digital backpack.
- The Aspen Family Portal will be the digital report card and communication tool for parents/guardians and teachers.
- Students may need to come to the school at designated times (with physical distancing protocols) for state-required assessments (AimsWeb Plus, TNReady, etc.)
- Instruction will be a blend of direct instruction, practice, inquiry, group meetings, small group, and whole-group support as dictated by the academic standards and the students' learning needs.
- Students will earn grades that will become part of their permanent academic history. For high school credit-bearing courses, grades will contribute to the formation of the students' GPA.
- Students enrolled in either the school's virtual classes or the district's QuEST Program remain enrolled in their assigned school and will be allowed to participate in after-school and extracurricular activities.
- The school day for Kindergarten students will be from 7:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
- The school day for Grades 1-5 will be from 7:45 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
- The school day for Grades 6-12 will be primarily from 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- Each student will be given a schedule by their teacher that identifies the times that they will log in for the school day.

Example: Virtual Learning Program High School Schedule		
1 <sup>st</sup> period - Algebra I	8:30 a.m.-10 a.m.	Base school teacher with other virtual program students from the base school.
2 <sup>nd</sup> period - English I	10 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Base school teacher with other virtual program students from the base school.
Lunch		
3 <sup>rd</sup> period - German I	12:30 p.m.-2 p.m.	<u>QuEST Class</u> - Base school is not able to provide a section from a German I teacher, so a seat request in a district-wide German I virtual class is made. This student logs into German I and takes the class with other students who are from different KCS high schools.
4 <sup>th</sup> period - ACT Prep	2 p.m.-3:30 p.m.	Base school teacher with other virtual program students from the base school.

Elementary and middle school students will either spend all day with their virtual program teacher from their base school or all day with a virtual program teacher from QuEST, if the base school cannot accommodate.

## Technology

The Knox County Board of Education voted in May 2020 to support a 1:1 initiative that will provide every student with a device. These devices will be supported using the same information technology support system that is currently in place. This system will be augmented, modified and adapted as may prove necessary over time.

- KCS will use primarily Chromebooks to implement the 1:1 initiative adopted by the Board of Education.
- Parents will be required to provide permission for each of their children to participate in the 1:1 program.
- All devices will be provided free of charge and will be turned back in at the end of the school year.
- Families will be given the option to purchase device insurance for \$30 that will cover device repair or replacement for one year. Chargers will be provided with each Chromebook; however, loss of the charger will not be covered by the insurance.
- School administration will determine the distribution method and timeline for distribution at their specific locations. Devices for students enrolled in the virtual learning program will be distributed on or before Aug. 10, 2020.
- Families will receive a flyer beginning July 20 detailing options for internet access, including those for low-income households.

## Student Supports (Special Education/ELL/GT/Section 504)

### Special Education

Our department is committed to providing free and appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities. During this public health crisis, we will continue to work with families to meet the needs of our students while following public health guidelines. Families will have the option of virtual programming if they choose to not have their student attend in-person. More specific information about virtual student supports will be sent to families directly from the Department of Student Supports.

- **Individual Educational Plan (IEP) Meetings:** Knox County Schools will continue to provide families the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the IEP process. Staff will work with families to determine if virtual or in-person meetings are appropriate. KCS will make every effort to balance parent preference and public health guidelines.
  
- **Delivery of Special Education and Related Services:** Teachers and service providers will work with families to prioritize services that provide access to the general curriculum and enable student progress toward IEP goals. Services for students will be addressed in collaboration with families on an individual basis.
  
- **Accommodations and Modifications:** Accommodations and modifications are provided regardless of the educational setting. The IEP team will work collaboratively to identify alternative solutions if it is determined an accommodation or modification is not appropriate or successful in a particular setting.
  
- **Supporting Parents as Learning Coaches:** Training and support will be provided in the following areas:
  - Using technology including individual student devices and virtual schooling platforms
  - Providing specific student modifications and accommodations to support learning
  - Utilizing visual supports
  - Managing behavior through positive strategies and techniques
  
- **Instructional Materials:** Teachers should ensure that students receive duplicate instructional materials to access at home during virtual learning. This may include modified materials as appropriate to meet individual student needs. Students may also need materials such as manipulatives, alternate text, or alternate tasks as appropriate. Additionally, teachers should provide access to recorded lessons, access to individual support from the teacher, and/or paraprofessional support as appropriate.
  
- **Confidentiality:** There may be times when a special educator and a general educator are working in collaboration during virtual instruction. All staff must be aware of specific student needs and strive to protect student confidentiality in the virtual learning setting. Staff should never discuss students' disabilities or individual needs in front of other students during a virtual learning session.
  
- **Data Collection/ Progress Monitoring:** Data will be collected on IEP goals and progress will continue to be reported as often as it is being reported for traditional schooling.

- **Progress Monitoring:** General educators and special educators should collaborate to ensure progress monitoring data continues to be collected in the virtual setting. This may also include data for re-evaluations needs.
- **Child Find:** Our district is still required to fulfill our child find responsibilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This responsibility includes parent and/or teacher referrals to the S-Team.

### **English Language Learners (ELL/EL)**

The ELL Department is dedicated to providing support services to both students and parents. We do this by providing ELs with instruction in English language development and supporting parents by increasing their access to timely communication and resources delivered in a manner which will increase comprehension. ELs' instruction will be delivered in accordance with WIDA Standards and the student's English-language proficiency level. This instruction may take place in a classroom or via an online platform.

- **Student enrollment support** for non-English speakers and international students will continue to be offered in accordance with public safety guidelines. Currently, enrollments are scheduled by appointment to ensure social distancing. To schedule an appointment, please call 865-594-1760 or email [jnna.slisher@knoxschools.org](mailto:jnna.slisher@knoxschools.org). In addition to completing enrollments, the Welcome Center staff will continue to support non-English speaking families by providing information regarding bus schedules, free and reduced-price meal applications, school policies and other wrap-around services.
- **Screening students for eligibility for ELL services** is being conducted at the Welcome Center by a certified ELL licensed teacher. When schools are open for instruction, parents may also elect to have the ELL teacher at their child's school complete the screening. If schools are not in session, or if a parent does not feel that it is safe to bring their child to the school, or to the Welcome Center for an English proficiency screening, a provisional screening may be provided via a digital platform. However, once the student returns to school, they must be rescreened for services using the state-mandated WIDA Screener.
- **Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)** for ELL students will continue to be created for each ELL student that has not tested out of active/direct services. The ILP will be developed through collaboration between the ELL and content teachers with input from the parent, student, and other persons as needed. The ILP will be shared with the parents and updated every 4.5 weeks. The parents may receive information regarding their child's ILP or provide input about the goals in person or via email, telephone, or video conferencing.

- **Delivery of ELL instructional services** will continue to be provided by a licensed ELL teacher. This instruction may take place within the classroom or via online learning. In addition, the teacher may utilize digital resources that are designed to increase language development and literacy.
- **Accommodations and modifications** will continue to be provided to ELL students regardless of the manner in which the instruction is delivered. ELL teachers will collaborate with content teachers to ensure that the instructional accommodations and modifications are appropriate to the ELs' English proficiency and literacy levels. In addition, content teachers will utilize the district's online ELL platform to monitor the ELs' progress and to identify instructional strategies.

### **Gifted and Talented Services (GT)**

The Knox County Schools Gifted and Talented Department is committed to continuing our work in the general education setting by teaching problem solving and thinking to our students, and supporting our teachers with resources to meet the needs of advanced learners in grades K-5. The KCS GT Department has eight service-delivery models used based on the needs of schools and students.

- K-2: GT Coaches will work in partnership with primary teachers utilizing co-planning, co-teaching and PLC; by providing resources; and through Tier 2 Enrichment service-delivery models.
- 3-5: GT Coaches will work in partnership with the intermediate teachers and schools to implement: small group direct instruction (utilizing various platforms to meet the needs of students), co-planning and co-teaching with teachers, support teachers in PLCs and through various professional development opportunities, and providing resources through Tier 2 Enrichment.

### **Section 504**

The Department is committed to providing access to educational opportunities for students with physical or mental disabilities. During this public health crisis, we will continue to work with families to meet the needs of our students while following public health guidelines. When a determination regarding the learning/medical needs are made, we will work with students and their families to set specific plans for accommodations and/or services. The department will work with schools to ensure all students are provided access and to prohibit discrimination according to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

- Knox County Schools will continue to provide families the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the 504 process. Staff will work with families to determine if virtual or in-person meetings are appropriate. KCS will make every effort to balance parent preference and public health guidelines.
- **Delivery of Services and Support:** Teachers and case managers will work with families to provide access to the general curriculum and enable student progress and growth. Services for students will be addressed in collaboration with families on an individual basis.

- **Accommodations:** Accommodations are provided regardless of the educational setting. The 504 team will work collaboratively to identify alternative solutions if it is determined an accommodation is not appropriate or successful in a particular setting.

## Health Services

The Department of Health Services is an integral part of the school community. The department assists students and families with preventative care needs and those with chronic health conditions. It is our goal for students to have access to healthcare, thus improving their capacity to learn and achieve at their highest potential.

School Health Services will serve as the primary contact for school-level protocols such as temperature screening and contact tracing.

## School Culture (Social, Emotional, Mental Health)

The Department of School Culture and the Counseling Department will provide schools with protocols and staff training necessary to support the additional social-emotional needs of our students, who attend school on campus or who enroll in the virtual learning program. Further development and expansion of the effective processes created for online counseling when school was closed will support the needs of students and staff.

The **1-2-3 Connect** Plan provides a framework of support for students, families and school personnel. Every student will be assigned at least **1)** caring adult at the school who checks in regularly with them and to whom they can reach out to for support; **2)** needs assessments will be completed, one with the students and one with each family to evaluate the need for additional supports in academic and non-academic areas; and **3)** main support personnel (teachers, counselors and social workers) will provide and coordinate support for students.

Focus will be given to:

### Trauma Informed Practices

- Each school personnel will have access to Trauma-Informed Practices Training.

### School Connectedness

- To strengthen the supportive transition to either educational environment, each student will have an assigned adult support person.

### Crisis response and suicide prevention

- Additional support personnel have been allocated to address the crisis needs of both students and staff.

### Social emotional learning

- The Social and Personal Competency curriculum has been redesigned to front-load the social and emotional standards and to support student learning of coping strategies.
- Recommendations have been made to provide time in the schedule to address social emotional learning within whole group settings.

### Counseling - Academic

- School master schedules will be adjusted to allow for both in-person and virtual class options.
- School counselors will revisit students' schedules to ensure that each student is offered course selection on a pathway to graduation.
- Student's class selections may have to be changed as not all course offerings may be offered on a virtual platform.

### Counseling - Mental Health

- Increased support and training for staff to address mental health issues related to COVID-19.
- Schools will promote self-care strategies for staff and students.
- School counseling and mental health staff will provide additional supports for students and staff who have increased anxiety.
- Exploration of partnering with a community mental health support network/task force, may increase support options for students and staff.

## **Communications**

The Department of Public Affairs is responsible for advancing the educational goals of Knox County Schools through public relations, communications, community outreach, and family engagement.

This work is an essential part of the district's mission at all times, but this is especially true as we approach the reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Feedback from our reopening focus groups and the Community Task Force has emphasized the desire among all stakeholders -- including teachers, students, parents and principals -- for clear, accurate and timely communication related to our decision-making processes.

During the reopening, the Department of Public Affairs is focused on three areas of communication to support the district's mission.

First, we are committed to providing transparent and thorough information about all aspects of district operations, both for our in-school students and those using the virtual learning program. Our stakeholders will have many questions about all areas of our work, including safety protocols; academic strategies; device deployment; support for students with special needs; transportation; and other issues.

Our communications strategy will seek to be proactive about anticipating the questions and concerns of our stakeholders, in order to provide the information they need before they ask. At the same time, we will establish flexible and responsive procedures that enable us to answer unanticipated questions quickly and accurately.



Second, we recognize that in addition to helping our stakeholders make informed decisions, proactive communication is important for their social and emotional well-being. The uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 has caused anxiety and consternation within our community, and the district has an important role to play in reassuring families, students and employees that we are advancing the work of teaching and learning while also protecting the health and safety of our community.

We will look for opportunities to highlight the outstanding leaders within KCS, and to amplify their voices as trusted resources for our stakeholders.

Finally, the reopening is an opportunity to foster a sense of solidarity and shared ownership of the district's educational mission. The challenges posed by COVID-19 are significant, and there will be difficulties along the way as we adapt to these realities. But the support of our students, families and employees has always been essential to the district's success, and we're confident that they will respond to this challenge with energy and enthusiasm.

With that in mind, the Department of Public Affairs will work to help stakeholders understand the actions that they can take to assist with the reopening, and to build a sense of shared mission within our community.

#### **External Communication – ALL LEVELS**

The goal of our external communication plan is to offer multiple platforms for our messaging, to ensure the broadest reach possible.

These platforms include:

- Website: [www.knoxschools.org](http://www.knoxschools.org)
- Social media: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
- Multilingual messaging: Translated messages through voice / text / email and Facebook pages in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Kirundi
- Voice / Text / Email: School Messenger
- Media Relations

#### **Community Outreach – ALL**

The goal of our community outreach plan is to serve as a liaison between various district stakeholders; to build relationships with important community partners; and to enlist their support in the work of teaching and learning.

- Office of Ombudsman: The District Ombudsman and Student Supports Parent Liaison serve as a resource for families, employees and the community to resolve issues or concerns through mediation and education. During the reopening, this office has played a critical role in planning related to internet accessibility for students and teachers and in acting as a liaison with nonprofit organizations that serve students.

### **Internal Communication – ALL LEVELS**

The goal of our internal communication plan is to ensure that employees are well-informed about issues relating to their work duties, and to help them feel connected to the broader mission of the district.

Strategies to accomplish this include:

- Monday Message newsletter
- Website: [www.knoxschools.org](http://www.knoxschools.org)
- Social media: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
- Voice / Text / Email

## **Glossary of Terms**

**ASPEN** – The student information system used by Knox County Schools. The Aspen Family Portal is the online access point for important student information and teacher communication.

This secure site provides an easy way to view student academic information including:

- Grades
- Upcoming assignments
- Attendance
- Progress reports/report cards
- State testing scores

Family Portal also allows students and families to email teachers and set automatic email notifications if a grade falls below a specific threshold.

Additionally, some teachers use the site to build classroom pages and to manage parent communication. These pages are accessed only by logging in and may include announcements, a course syllabus, dates for important assignments and links to classroom information.

**Asynchronous learning** – Instruction provided by a certified educator to students who participate in instruction at a separate time from when the teacher delivered the instruction. This may include but not be limited to methods such as printed work materials, teacher-assigned individual or group projects, audio- or video-recorded lessons, or online course modules, or other appropriate methods as determined by the district.

**Canvas** – The learning management platform used in Knox County that allows schools to deliver a virtual learning environment that meets the needs of the student and the school. Student assignments can be found in and submitted through this platform.

**Chromebook** – The device that KCS students will receive prior to or at the beginning of the school year.

**FERPA** – The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. This act is a federal law that protects student privacy.

**Microsoft Teams** – The secure online platform that will be used in Knox County for teachers to communicate with students and parents and to deliver synchronous instruction.

**On-campus learning** – Learning that occurs in-person and on school campuses, in a traditional classroom setting.

**QuEST** – An acronym for Quality Education for Students using Technology. QuEST provides students who opt for virtual learning with online access to courses. These courses have been developed by Knox County teachers and uphold the state and district course standards. Additionally, students can take courses not offered at their base school through the QuEST program.

**Synchronous learning** – Instruction provided by a certified educator to a student or students at the same time but not necessarily in the same place who engage in instruction while it occurs. This may include but not be limited to in-person instruction or telephonic, internet-based, or other appropriate methods of communication as determined by the district and may include full-class or small-group instruction or one-on-one instruction between student and teacher.

**Virtual learning** (Distance Learning, Remote Learning, Online Learning) – refers to a model of instructional delivery that occurs in a virtual learning environment (Canvas and Microsoft Teams) with content that is consistent with state standards and district curriculum, but is designed for self-paced (asynchronous) or online class meetings (synchronous) using online teaching and tutoring.

## Resources:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Knox County Health Department](#)

[Tennessee Department of Education](#)

[Tennessee Department of Health](#)

[Tennessee Pledge](#)