

HOWARD SCHOOL DISTRICT 48-3
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“The mission of the Howard School District is to provide each student with the educational foundation on which to build a successful life in a global society.”

Greetings from the Howard School District:

As we enjoy the last half of summer, our thoughts naturally shift toward the upcoming school year and families excitedly look forward to what the next academic year will bring. This year, with the extreme challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented, there will be some noticeable changes when students and staff return to school. While there are still many uncertainties and questions, the health and safety of our students and staff will continue to be our top priority. I wish I could tell you with 100% certainty that we know *exactly* what the Coronavirus will do and how it will impact our school year but the reality is, no one has that information. What I *can* tell you is that (1) we have been involved in frequent meetings with state agencies and other schools from across the state to gather the most current information available, (2) we have already started putting preventative measures in place, and (3) we will continue to prepare and adapt in order to be as proactive as possible.

A ‘Return to Learn 2020’ COVID-19 Committee comprised of 20 individuals from a cross-section of the school community, medical profession, school, etc. met recently to discuss their concerns and offer suggestions. The level of engagement and ideas from that committee was impressive. In addition, we received an excellent response and feedback from surveys sent to families and staff. It is obvious that everyone understands that school districts face immense challenges and that they care very much about our students and staff. We are very appreciative of having so much input and support as we navigate these unsettling times. Please be assured that we are relying on health and safety information from experts to guide our decisions and we will continue to do everything we can to provide the best educational opportunities for our students in a safe environment.

As of today, based on the feedback we have received from the family and staff surveys, the COVID-19 committee, and state/local agencies, we are planning to follow the adopted 2020-2021 school calendar in which the first day of school for students is August 19, 2020. We have three potential “phases” of operation:

- 1) Normal Operation – traditional start to the school year with several COVID accommodations (see attached)
- 2) Mitigation Strategies – remote learning for individuals who require quarantine or have tested positive
- 3) Remote Platform – school closure requiring 100% remote learning (re-evaluated every two weeks)

Please know that we will begin with Phase 1 and then, depending upon the spread of the virus, be prepared to move to other phases as necessary. If we have to move to Phase 3, we will re-evaluate every two weeks in the hopes it becomes safe to move back to Phase 2, etc. Again, the health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority and we will rely on information from the Department of Health, the Department of Education and the Center for Disease Control along with local input to guide our decisions.

The attached sheet provides the general framework and list of accommodations we are making for the start of the school year. We are committed to doing everything we can to have a normal school year but again, please be reminded that this is a very fluid situation and these plans and accommodations may change, with or without notice.

We hope to receive more guidance from state and federal agencies in the next few weeks so another letter with more information will be sent as the school year gets closer. Thank you for your ongoing patience and support as we continue to prepare for the upcoming school year. As always, please contact me if you have questions, ideas or other helpful information.

Kind regards,

Dr. Marie Lohsandt
Superintendent

The following is a brief overview of accommodations we are making to prepare for the start of the school year:

- Deep cleaning and sanitizing of our facilities (continued frequently throughout the day).
- Purchased five sanitizer fogging machines.
- Require temperature and symptom check by parents before sending students to school (if sick, keep student home).
- Require temperature and symptom check for anyone entering a school facility during school hours (before or after school is “enter at your own risk”).
- Masks optional but encouraged. Staff working directly across from students will wear PPE.
- Hand sanitizer located at each entrance, high traffic areas, every classroom, outside restrooms, etc.
- Hygiene breaks to encourage hand washing, sanitizing, etc.
- Signage in restrooms to demonstrate proper hand washing technique.
- Buses - Sanitize upon entering and exiting. Every other seat vacant. Assigned seating. Siblings sit together.
- Buses will be sanitized with “fogger” after every use (at least twice a day).
- Signage at each entrance and throughout each building to encourage social distancing.
- After symptom check at entry, students will go directly to their classroom or to playground.
- Students will be kept with their cohort class as much as possible.
- Classroom desks spread apart as much as possible, facing same direction. Soft seating will not be used.
- Possible modification of class schedules and/or locations.
- No sharing of supplies unless absolutely necessary (sanitize before sharing).
- Limit visitors and volunteers. No lunch guests. Vendors or deliveries must call ahead and be screened at the door.
- Staggered lunches to allow for social distancing. Use every other pedestal seat in lunchrooms.
- Hand washing and/or sanitizer required before entering lunchroom.
- Clear protective shield installed in food serving line. Staff will enter PIN# on keypad.
- Salad bar items packaged individually. Milk handed to students rather than self-serve.
- Hallway pass times will be staggered to allow for social distancing.
- Recess times may be staggered. Playground will be sectioned off to maintain small groups. Hand washing and/or sanitizing required when re-entering the building.
- Bottle fillers at water fountains only (no fountain spickets will be used).
- High-touch areas (keyboards, door handles, desks, chairs, counters, etc.) will be sanitized frequently.
- A student showing symptoms will be immediately isolated, masked and parent/guardian will be called to pick up. Discretion and confidentiality will be exercised as much as possible.
- A staff member showing symptoms will be immediately isolated, masked and asked to go home. Discretion and confidentiality will be exercised as much as possible.
- Designated locations in each building for individuals who do not feel well and need to be checked.
- Staff will wear PPE when near student or staff showing symptoms.
- Windows will remain open as much as possible. Air handlers will be adjusted to bring in more fresh air.
- Clear protective shields installed in many high-traffic areas.
- School vehicles cleaned and sanitized after every use.
- Open House may be ‘sign up’ based to allow for social distancing. More information to come.
- Extra-curriculars and athletics – waiting for information from the SD High School Activities Assn (end of July)
- Important: If a student or staff member tests positive, the Department of Health will immediately call or visit to facilitate the entire process for the family and the school. Appropriate individuals will be contacted by DOH and/or the school. (If you suspect your student or family has been exposed, please contact your health care provider immediately.)