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Greetings DeKalb County School District Family,

Thank you for your continued focus on academic excellence as we enter October. I continue to be inspired every day by the efforts of our DCSD teachers and families partnering together to provide an outstanding learning experience in our virtual environment.

Re-opening of Schools Face-to-Face

These first few months of the school year have been challenging for students, parents/guardians, and staff; however, together, we have faced all challenges as opportunities to unite and be innovative to ensure our students have a rigorous learning experience. As communicated often, the safety and well-being of our staff, students, and families remain our priority during these uncertain times.

As you already know, the District committed on July 13th to sharing monthly updates with all stakeholders during each Board meeting. During the Board meeting on September 14th, the District disclosed and discussed the phase-in plan. Once the 14-day average per 100,000 DeKalb County residents is 100 or less, the District can begin the transitioning process to move to the next phase but not before. Under my leadership, the COVID-19 Re-Opening Task Force monitors the data trends daily and acknowledges that there has been a significant decline in the 14-day average per 100,000 DeKalb County residents from 122 on September 12th to 104 on October 2nd.

In anticipation of a steady decline, the District will engage in the following activities to prepare our staff, students, and families for the transition to the next phases:

Action
Continue Meeting with Medical Experts Advisory Group Bi-Weekly
Continue Meeting with Advisory Groups
Send Staff Notification
Send Staff 2-Week Return to Hybrid Working Environment Notification
Begin Phase II: Hybrid Working Environment (10, 11, and 12-month Staff)
Distribute the Parent/Guardian <i>Intent to Return</i> Notification Electronically
Begin Phase III: Traditional Working Environment 5 Days Per Week (10, 11, and 12-month Staff)
Digital Learning Half Day
Begin One-Day Hybrid Learning Environment for Beta Group
Begin One-Day Hybrid Learning Environment for All Students Who Opt-In and Continue Distance/Remote Learning for Students Who Do Not

Please note that the tentative timeline is subject to change based on COVID-19 data and current health guidance from medical experts and health agencies. On October 19th, the COVID-19 Task Force will provide the monthly update to the Board of Education and all stakeholders.

COVID-19 Re-Opening Task Force Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How does the District determine the level of community spread?

Answer: The COVID-19 Re-Opening Task Force closely monitors the reported, confirmed COVID-19 cases among DeKalb County residents per 100,000 residents during a 14-day period to determine the level of community spread.

Question: What are the levels of community spread?

Answer: The Georgia Department of Public Health defined the levels of community spread as follows:

Substantial: greater than 100 cases per 100,000

Minimal/Moderate: 6-100 cases per 100,000

No/Low: 1-5 cases

Question: What are the recommended learning models in each level of the community spread zones?

Answer: In the red zone, **"substantial spread"** yields a distance/remote learning

environment. This can be a targeted implementation in which the entire school district is impacted or an isolated school. The duration can be short or long-term.

In the yellow zone, **“minimal/moderate spread”** includes the following options: full distance/remote learning, hybrid, or traditional. Hybrid learning environments are alternating schedules for students to attend face-to-face coupled with at-home distance/remote learning. The other possibility in minimal/moderate is traditional which means in-person learning with regards to social distancing and the implementation of mitigation strategies to keep the environment safe.

In the green zone, **“low or no spread”** leads to a traditional learning environment while being proactive and implementing safety protocols.

Question: When will the District transition to the next phase?

Answer: The District is still in the **“substantial spread”** category. Acknowledging that there is a steady decline, the District is preparing for the re-entry of staff and students gradually and safely. A consistent number of cases between 6-100 (yellow zone) will allow the District to transition to a hybrid environment. Please note that the hybrid model can shift to **red** if the number of cases increases above 100 or transition to **green** if the number of cases drops below 6.

Question: When hybrid learning begins, how will students be organized?

Answer: Schools will organize all classes into **two cohorts** based on **alpha order** to adhere to social/physical distancing requirements and safety guidance. Local schools will collaborate with families to align the schedules of siblings. In both hybrid models (one day per week and two days per week), Wednesdays will be reserved for small group instruction, tutoring, appointments for student conferencing, parent conferencing, services, professional learning, collaborative planning and instructional planning.

Question: When will special education and 504 students begin receiving face-to-face services?

Answer: The hybrid learning environment will allow the District to provide in-person services at the school for our special education students and 504 students on hybrid days. Speech language, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral support. Our Intellectual Disabilities liaisons and autism/behavior support staff will collaborate with families and teachers to prepare the students for the transition between phases because of the change in structure and routine.

Question: How will the District respond if an outbreak occurs in a classroom, school, or cluster?

Answer: If a school-based staff member or student tests positive for COVID-19, there will be a targeted impact on the school and/or classroom which could include a transition to distance/remote learning and working environments for a period of time.

Question: How will the District respond if a staff member or student is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19?

Answer: If a staff member or student is exhibiting symptoms, the staff member or student will be immediately isolated. The District will follow the guidance from the Georgia Department of Public Health, DeKalb Public Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Question: Will wraparound services be available for students as we prepare for re-entry?

Answer: Yes, schools will continue to receive support to ensure that students are successful. School Social Workers, Psychologists, Counselors and other support staff will work closely with teachers and administrators to eliminate barriers that impact student success.

Question: Mental health awareness will be very important as we look to re-enter school. How will the district support this effort?

Answer: The District will remain committed to providing training in Youth Mental Health Awareness for staff in local schools. Modules are being developed to allow the training to occur virtually, as well as during face to face sessions.

Question: How will parents remain connected during the re-entry phase?

Answer: Parent and Family Engagement will continue to utilize the virtual platform to share strategies and best practices for parents. The school district's website is also a great resource for the most current information regarding re-entry.

Question: Does the school district provide translation and interpretation support for families?

Answer: Yes. Local schools should contact the English Learner Department for documents that need to be translated. Interpreters are assigned to schools with large numbers of English Learners. Additional support can be requested to support schools with higher numbers of families with a primary home language other than English (PHLOTE's).

Question: Will students participating in fall sports be able to have competitive play?

Answer: Yes, the district will allow varsity fall sports to begin competitive play during the first of October. The COVID-19 Health Team will continue to monitor the data to determine if the activities will continue and if spectators will be allowed.

Question: What is the definition of "auxiliary groups"?

Answer: Auxiliary groups are associated with the marching band. Schools have dance teams, flag corps, pep teams, majorettes, and drill teams that participate at football games.

Question: Are drama, debate and dance/theater students allowed to practice?

Answer: Co-curricular activities (newspapers, musical performances, art shows, mock trials, debate competitions, mathematics team, spelling bee, science fair, robotics, and engineering teams and contests) will resume when the hybrid one day or two-day phases begin. The students will be able to participate on the day that they attend school on their assigned day(s). We will continue collaborating with local school administrators to address co-curricular activities

and extra-curricular activities (club sports included) not sanctioned by GHSA.

Question: What is the meaning of a pod?

Answer: Pods should consist of the same group of individuals for the entire period of pod activity. Students should be pre-assigned by the directors and commanders and their staff to a pod grouping. The pod assignment should not change from day to day. A permanent adjustment can be made to a pod if another person is removed from the pod permanently. Pod rehearsals should be scheduled in a format to eliminate bottlenecking at entry/exit points, allow for sanitizing and proper storage of equipment, and for proper room air exchange (20 minutes).

Question: Has the school district provided cleaning protocols?

Answer: The District has provided guidance related to cleaning for the enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of schools and office buildings. Cleaning protocols are in place that include sanitizing high touch and frequently used areas.

Question: What COVID-19 related supplies are available for schools?

Answer: The Business Services Department has delivered the COVID-19 related supplies needed for school re-opening. This includes hand sanitizer, cleaning and disinfecting supplies, masks, gloves and other items for safety and cleaning. The Business Services Department is prepared with additional COVID-19 related supplies as needed for schools and facilities.

Question: What measures have been put in place to address ventilation in schools and office buildings?

Answer: Staff is performing quarterly maintenance on all HVAC units including cleaning and filter changes. Also, HVAC units have been adjusted as appropriate to increase ventilation in accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and industry recommendations.

Question: What precautionary measures have been put in place to support a safe return to school and work?

Answer: Plexiglass partitions are being installed at reception desks and public-facing workspaces. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been placed in high traffic areas. Also, public health signage has been placed throughout facilities as reminders of health practices, protocols and hygiene.

Question: What safety precautions will be provided for students riding the school bus?

Answer: Students will be required to wear masks, and hand sanitizer will be available as students board the bus. Drivers and monitors will be required to wear masks and will be provided face shields.

Question: Will bus transportation be provided to and from school for eligible students?

Answer: Bus routes will run as normal. The hybrid schedule will reduce the number of riders and support social distancing on buses.

Question: Can my child use his/her personal device in the school?

Answer: DCSD will provide access to a guest network for non-DCSD devices. The list of devices that will be allowed to connect to the school district's network will be provided to all parents and students. Please be advised that the District cannot repair or support personal devices.

Question: Will my child be able to access a device even though we declined during the remote learning period?

Answer: Yes. The District is committed to providing each student in need with a device. The parent would make the request with the school and sign a device user agreement. A device would then be provided to the student.

Question: What if my child's device is damaged while in school?

Answer: Students will be responsible for their personal devices. Incidents involving device damage while at school will be investigated and handled by the school administration. If the student has not checked out a district device, they may assign a device for that student to use.

Question: Will my child need an internet connectivity device (hot spot) while in school?

Answer: The school district provides wireless internet connectivity in all schools and facilities. Students will not need an additional device to connect.

Question: Will my child have access to the same virtual tools at home as they will at school?

Answer: The virtual learning environment is made up of cloud-based applications that are accessible anywhere and at any time. Access to these applications will not be interrupted.

COVID 19 Medical Advisory Committee Meeting

Special thanks to our Medical Advisory Task Force who took the time to virtually meet with me this week. This committee serves in an advisory capacity and they are tasked with making recommendations on the timing and conditions for face-to-face instruction that will best fit the needs of all students, parents, teachers, and other district personnel. The committee will convene twice a month for one (1) hour to discuss best practices for operating our schools safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cabinet Retreat

Finally, this week I hosted a virtual Cabinet Retreat. This was a great opportunity to discuss diversity and inclusion in DCSD and how to maintain equity and access for all scholars. Many members asked vulnerable questions to understand better how racial biases may impact a

scholar's academic and lifelong success. I know firsthand that conversations on race and equity can be difficult for all of us. However, the District remains committed to educational parity for all students.

I hope everyone has a great weekend. Thank you to the many families who take the time to provide feedback on how we can best safely move forward, and thank you to our scholars who continue to put their best foot forward in remote learning every day.

Your #1 Cheerleader,

Cheryl Watson-Harris