

# Highlands School District Task Force for Reopening Schools

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Student Learning Options

#### **What is your plan for reopening schools for the start of the 2020-21 school year?**

Highlands School District plans to implement a *hybrid* approach - **2 days in school, 3 days remote learning** - for the start of the 2020-21 school year. Students will be divided into two groups; one group attends in person on Mondays/Tuesdays and the other group attends in person on Wednesdays/Thursdays. On Friday, all students will attend school remotely. Academic classes will have cameras and students working remotely will be required to participate under direction of their teachers via Zoom. Daily attendance is required and classwork, assignments and assessments are graded. [See infographic.](#)

#### **I am not comfortable with sending my child to school for the start of the 2020-21 school year. Can I have my child participate in remote learning for all 5 days?**

Yes, Highlands School District offers parents the opportunity to choose our own Highlands Virtual Academy (HVA) for a full week of remote learning. HVA is a cyber program that offers the same high quality curriculum, but through the Edgenuity and Accelerate platforms. HVA also provides for an easy return to the traditional classroom or hybrid model after a 9 week grading period. Daily attendance is required and classwork, assignments and assessment are graded. [See infographic.](#)

**What is the process for determining the two groups of students and when will I know which days students will be scheduled for in-person learning?** Highlands School District is dividing all district students into two cohorts (groups) alphabetically according to the first letter of their last names. School administrators are making sure that the numbers in the two groups are about the same, and that the number of students in each class meets the guidelines for social distancing. We are making every effort to ensure that students in the same household are in the same cohort as much as possible. More information about your child's group will be released as soon as possible in August.

**How will the district know what student learning option I prefer for my child?** The district will be sending out a survey to all families via the district website. This survey will give parents the opportunity to choose the learning model that works best for their child(ren) and family.

**My child is not able to attend school in-person due to medical concerns. What are my options?** Students who are at a higher risk for severe illness will have their individual situation reviewed by the district's Pandemic Coordinator and educational team to identify procedures and protocols that will ensure the safest school environment possible, which may include remote learning. ***Please contact your child's principal for more information.***

**How will you accommodate students with an IEP or 504 Plan?** The District will continue to follow and implement Individual Education Programs (IEPs) as developed by the student's IEP team. A student's IEP team may reconvene to evaluate and adjust each student's IEP as necessary.

**Will my child receive a device to use for remote learning?** Yes! All Highlands students in grades 1-12 will receive a Chromebook and Kindergarten students will receive an iPad for student learning. The district is developing a timeline and procedures for a device distribution in August.

**I don't have internet access. How will my child be able to participate in remote learning?** Highlands School District has purchased Wi-Fi hot spots to ensure that all students have Wi-Fi access. Families will be required to provide documentation that they do not have Internet services at home, in order to qualify. More information about the hot spots will be shared prior to the beginning of the school year.

## Transportation

**How will you adjust student transportation to meet social distancing requirements?** Transportation of district students will be greatly reduced to minimize ridership, through parent transportation, increased walking boundaries, and A/B schedules. Students who ride the bus will be socially distanced with a maximum of 2 students per assigned seat. In addition, students are required to wear a face mask in transit (unless a medical clearance is provided). Parents/guardians are encouraged to promote social distancing at bus stops.

**Will the bus be sanitized each day?** Yes, all buses will be fully sanitized daily and in between each run.

**What is the health and safety protocol for bus drivers?** Bus drivers will be screened before each run to check their temperature / symptoms. Drivers will be required to wear face masks / shields.

**How will you determine the bus schedules and busing needs for the 2020-21 school year?** Parents will receive a letter in the mail that includes a Transportation Form to be returned to the school or completed online. It is important that the form be completed **by August 7** in order for the district to develop appropriate bus schedules and determine social distanced seat assignments.

## Health / Safety

**How will you monitor students and staff daily for symptoms of Covid-19?** Parents will complete a temperature check on their child each morning and complete the district's Health Screening Checklist. Students will submit this form upon arrival to school. Staff will utilize the same procedure. Students and staff should NOT report to school/work if they have a temperature above 100.4.

**What are your protocols for students and staff regarding exposure to and infection of COVID-19?** Please refer to the district's [Decision Tree](#), a tool designed to assist school officials in determining the proper procedure by which to address cases of exposure to and infection of COVID-19 in students and staff members. Families will be notified on an as needed basis regarding confirmed staff or student illnesses or exposure that results to changes in the Health and Safety Plan. General information will be provided ongoing via the district's website and social media outlets, along with utilization of the school messenger system.

**Will my child be required to wear a face covering in school?** Yes. Face coverings will be required (unless medical clearance is provided) for all students and staff while on school premises while also practicing social distancing. Face shields will be provided for all students and staff to use; however, students and staff are permitted to use their own if they prefer. Face shields will be sanitized, placed in a protected and properly identified bag and will remain at school at the end of the day. Therefore, students will need their own face covering for the arrival and dismissal process. [See Pennsylvania's Order for Requiring Universal Face Coverings.](#)

**Will my child be permitted to remove his/her face covering at any time during the school day?** Yes. Students may remove their face coverings when they are seated at desks or assigned work spaces at least 6 feet apart; eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or engaged in any activity at least 6 feet apart (e.g. face covering breaks, recess, etc.).

**How will classrooms be organized to mitigate spread of the virus?** Social distancing protocols will be in place throughout the district and will include frequent and ongoing monitoring of classroom spaces. Classroom furniture, other than teacher and student desks, will be removed to achieve maximum distancing and instructional space. Student desks will be spaced 6 feet apart and will be positioned to face the same direction. Student and teacher movement within the classroom will be limited in order to maintain distancing. Large communal spaces will be used as necessary when groups of students need to be socially distanced farther than the classroom spaces will allow.

Teachers will also make intentional and regular use of outdoor spaces for student free time, and instruction as appropriate.

**What social distancing protocols will be in place for other building communal spaces and activities (hallways, restrooms, recess, gym, etc.)?** Student arrival and dismissal will be staggered to reduce interaction, and hallway traffic will be routed through single direction access. Use of restrooms by students and staff will be limited. Students will not take restroom breaks as a class in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Recess and procedures for the use of the gymnasium and playground will also encourage social distancing and will focus on more structured activities and stations. Large group gatherings will be minimized or eliminated to follow social distancing guidelines.

**What are your procedures for serving school meals to students?** Meals will be served through a combination of grab and go options and hot meals as feasible. In an attempt to assure the appropriate distancing of students, the district will use additional spaces to serve lunches. Plexiglass partitions will be installed in serving areas to avoid contact with students and food. Cafeteria equipment will be sanitized between lunch periods.

**What hygiene routines will be implemented throughout the school day?** A specific time will be devoted throughout the day to promote handwashing and hygiene. Frequent hand washing/sanitizing will be required before meals and after physical education classes. Signage will also be posted throughout each building regarding procedures for good hygiene.

**What visitor and volunteer procedures will you implement to mitigate spread of the virus?** Visitors who are essential to school business must make an appointment with the appropriate personnel. Visitors who are delivering items to the buildings must do so at the capture vestibule, not in the school office. During this time, volunteers will not be utilized within school buildings to minimize adults within each building.

## Cleaning/Sanitizing

**How often will you implement cleaning, sanitation and disinfecting protocols and procedures to maintain staff and student safety?** The district's custodial and maintenance staff will clean and sanitize daily, with additional "deep cleaning" on Tuesday evenings and Fridays using a disinfectant that is safe for all students and staff and meets OSHA and CDC requirements. In addition, portable hand sanitizing stations will be placed in high traffic areas, and each classroom will have hand sanitizing stations, sanitizing wipes and disinfectant spray.

**Does the district have plans to improve the ventilation throughout the buildings?** Yes, ventilation will be increased by adjusting start up times for equipment where possible, along with increasing the introduction of fresh air through open windows and fresh air dampers. The district plans to install needlepoint bipolar ionization devices in classrooms, which will help to purify the air and mitigate the spread of the virus.

## Miscellaneous

**How will the reopening and hybrid model affect the daily school bell schedules?** The district does not anticipate any arrival and dismissal time changes for any of the school buildings. However, small changes to the daily bell schedule between periods may be necessary to facilitate social distancing. Principals are determining daily schedules according to building needs.

**Will the district still offer orientation days before the school year begins for students transitioning to a new building?** Yes, on-site orientation days will be scheduled in mid-August and the number of students and staff per session will be limited in accordance with social distancing requirements. More information will be shared with families of Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 5 and Grade 9 students.

**How will the district handle students who refuse to follow the district's Covid mitigation protocol?** School building handbooks will reflect updates about Covid mitigation protocol expectations and consequences. Handbooks will be available prior to the school year.